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SILENT TOM



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SILENT TOM.

AN AMERICAN
THOUSAND DOLLAR
PRIZE TALE.

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SILENT TOM.



CHAPTER I.

SANTY'S HOME.

"When shall love freely flow,
Pure as life's river?
When shall sweet friendship glow
Changeless for ever?"

STONEYHEDGE was a large, lonely farm-house, with its surroundings, situated on the edge of a wide, barren field. A long reach of rocky land, diversified by a blue strip of river, and a few acres of wood-lots, stretched to the right. To the left, a narrow road ran straight to the populous village of Winterswood.

The house stood bleak and bare, unpainted without and unpapered within. What poetry there was about it slept in old mosses that found a lodgment over doors and windows, or crept with a smile of thrift, hiding the dead wood below, over the time-stained old walls.

The house had an individuality of its own. It was narrow and long, and bore on its front an inhospitable air. Do not houses assimilate with their owners? One can tell the homestead of a generous man. The very flowers seem glad to blossom for him.

There were no flowers save those of nature's own planting in the uneven grounds of Stoneyhedge. Cold blood flowed in the veins of its master. His eye never brightened,

save when it gloated over bank-notes, and so the house was slowly going to decay. Its aspect of forlornness suggested the entire absence of all things genial and loving.

The great kitchen was bare of comforts. The walls were begrimed and broken; the fire always smouldered. There was plenty of that commodity so rare now-a-days,—chimney-corner; indeed, the corners looked cavernous. A few bricks supported the two or three damp, slender sticks, cut short for economy's sake.

A few cooking utensils stood on the hearth and shone on the dresser in the rays of the warm, red sun, that lights neither meanness nor poverty.

The management of the house,—if I can so speak of duties which were all, in some way, mismanaged,—was under the supervision of a half-demented creature, by name Margaret Ewer, familiarly called Mit, by the few who knew her. Forty years before, when little more than a child, Stoneyhedge had offered her a refuge from the work-house, and she answered the purpose for which she had been selected admirably,—that was to make the most she could out of the very least that could be provided for household necessities. She was an honest soul, and would have starved rather than exceed the limits of her master's commands. Her pinched figure and lank face were suggestive of few and scanty meals.

Santy, a girl of twelve, was the niece of old Simon Grue. She had lived with him since her fifth year,—seven years of bondage to toil, hunger, and exposure.

Santy's room was over the kitchen, on the east side of the house. Like the others, it was large, and bare, and cold. A flock-bed stood in one corner. There were no chairs. A solitary, much-worn, three-legged stool, drawn up near the window, told curiously of Santy's solitary musings. Whenever she had anything to "think out," as

she called it, she invariably sat in this place, with the ragged coverlet, that served as a shawl, thrown over her shoulders.

The best view of the surrounding country could be obtained at Santy's window. It was beautiful in her eyes, because she could see the long road to the thickly-populated village; also the smoke, curling in its blue spirals from a little line of cottages, nearly a mile distant, that had been recently erected. These whiffs of vapour suggested companionship. It made her less lonely to watch them, and wonder who sat about the fires below. She knew there were children there, and a few young men and maidens, because in blackberrying season they always went by Simon's house to the woods.

Since the quarry had been discovered to be so valuable, and some two hundred labouring men had been added to the population of Winterswood, poor little Santy had found a new interest in her cheerless life. She talked it over with white Jenny, her one bantam-hen; sometimes she questioned her uncle about it, but Simon was as chary of his words as his money; and Mit, though she could talk in her vacant way, never satisfied her. It was better to hear white Jenny's cheerful clucking.

The day on which my story opens had been stormy. In the early gloomy twilight the wind went rushing and wailing like a voice of woe around the naked eaves. Like a wrathful spirit it shook the panes in Santy's uncurtained window. The child sat there; very quiet and forlorn she looked in the gathering darkness.

She shivered, holding her chin in her hands. She strained her vision to catch the first glimpse of the first light that should make its appearance in the line of little cottages, behind which the high, treeless hill seemed to frown—the hill where the quarries began.

Santy, as usual, was trying to "think it out."

On the foot of the flock-bed laid a nondescript figure, which, in all its ludicrous homeliness, showed touchingly the bent of the poor girl's yearning tenderness, stifled at all other outlets. It was an old, worm-eaten bed-wrench, —once common to ancient house-keepers,—and this Santy had dressed up, to the best of her ability, in odds and ends of coloured paper and rags. It was her baby, dearer to her than many a petted wax doll to its surfeited little mistress.

This creature she often stole upstairs to love and fondle. It shared her bed, and when the old man was absent from home, as he sometimes was for days together, she took the wooden monstrosity down to the scantily-furnished table.

Santy blew her fingers, and then drummed on the pane. She traced the fitful drops, she rolled her shivering frame in the coverlet, and muttered to herself.

"I wonder what for it rains?" she sighed wearily; "it makes such black clouds between here and the cottages! Oh!" her hands went down and her face brightened as she pressed it close to the window, "there's the first light. Don't it look nice? Somebody's got home from their work, and he's gone out to wash his hands against his supper. He'll have bacon, I guess, or cold meat, and lots of it. *We* don't light up when Uncle Simon comes home; he don't want light, nor fire, nor anything. It never looks cheerful here, and"—her pinched lips came together,—"*we never* have enough to eat!"

"I s'pose there's lots of children there," she went on *soto voce*, "and fathers and mothers. What good times they must have! I don't believe they ever eat acorns because they are *so* hungry," and up went her hands to her chin again.

Santy did not often indulge in her miserable moods, but that day she had been thinking over her small past. Her first years were not pleasant to remember. Disliked by a step-father, her mother overburdened with toil, a narrow home of poverty where there were too many mouths to feed, a time when her mother sickened and rose from her sick bed the fretful shadow of her better self, declaring that it was impossible to take care of children while they had neither money nor friends ; and at last, in answer to a passionate letter, Uncle Simon Grue made his appearance, and bargained to take poor little Santy off their hands ; how vividly each sorrowful picture seemed stamped upon her brain !

Santy heard her mother say again, "Your poor brother was very fond of her, Simon, and I can't see her starve or beg."

She saw herself trembling in the corner, her three-year-old sister clinging to her knees ; she felt the hot tears fall on the child's pretty curls.

Even at its best, Uncle's Simon's face was one not calculated to inspire confidence in a sensitive nature. There was no tenderness in its hard, grave outlines ; there was nothing but speculation in his cold, grey eyes, and who ever saw Simon Grue smile ?

"Give her to me, then, for good and all," said Uncle Simon ; "put it down on paper. If you'll let her alone and me alone, I'll take her, and do well by her. But remember, I am *never* to hear from you by word or letter."

"Mother came up to me that night," Santy used to say, and poor Mit knew the childish story by heart, "and took me up in the bed, and hugged and hugged me, and cried so that my face was all covered with her tears. I cried, too, and kept begging her not to send me away ; I'd go work for her ; I wouldn't mind father's crossness, if she'd

only let me stay. How could I go with that dreadful looking old man? But she kept shaking her head, and said that Uncle Simon was awful rich, and could make me a lady; besides, she couldn't go back, now, for it was best for me, and uncle had given them some money to keep them from starving. I can see it all, now; he bought me, and took me where there wasn't a soul to see or to love, or one good square meal of victuals to eat in all the year round."

Yes, he had bought the child, some good intentions being counted in with the money, but they were forgotten.

The child grew up in a terrible loneliness. There were no children near her, even if she had been allowed or encouraged to make friendship. So she petted the trees with her cheeks laid lovingly against their rough coats, and made companions of all the sweet inanimate things that grew up in God's great family of love, and told Mit her little secrets, and poured her smiles and her kisses upon poor dolly Bedwrench.

One after another the long row of cottages came out alight upon the deepening dusk. Santy had forgotten to wonder how many children there were gathering about pleasant firesides, so intently had she been thinking of the past, and wondering what in all this time had befallen the mother from whom she had never heard since the day she sobbed all the way from home to lonesome Winterswood. Suddenly she found her hands and cheeks quite wet. With a hysterical little sob she said,—

"The rain is coming through," caught up dolly Bedwrench, and crept shivering to the door.

CHAPTER II.

A WISH.

“The world can never give
 The bliss for which we sigh;
 ’Tis not the whole of life to live,
 Nor all of death to die.”

SANTY was not afraid of ghosts, she had never heard of them. Her fancy, vivid as it was, did not people the darkness with uncanny visions. Of all fairy-lore she was ignorant. The efforts of the clergyman of late years to induce Simon Grue to send his niece to school, were fruitless. Simon didn’t believe in schools. Who was to pay for shoe-leather, tramping miles over bad roads? Simon wanted no schools. Show him the colour of your money, and he was your friend.

The minister generally had the worst of it in an argument with Simon, for the latter had not his peer as a profane man.

Those who knew something of the history of Simon Grue said that an early disappointment had changed the whole tenor of his character—had made him a suspicious, morose, exaeting, penurious, unchristian member of the community. His face was set like a flint to do evil, and money was his god.

So Santy had only three calico frocks a year, and two pairs of clumsy-made cowhide shoes. Much of the time in summer she went bare-foot; it was luxury to tread the soft carpet of the fields and the woods.

Santy felt her way to the head of the stair-case, and step by step, drying her tears as she went, she gained the kitchen-door.

Mit was throwing on a few fine kindlings, and stooping over the blaze. A shrunken, yellow-faced woman, with eyes of almost supernatural brightness, and crow's-feet that ran in deep, sharp lines to her shadow of a double chin,—for, strange to say, poor and thin as she was, she could faintly lay claim to that prerogative of stateliness,—a bending, weary habit of body; and there was Mit, with the ghost of a smile on her face at sight of Santy.

“Do you suppose Uncle Simon will be home to-night?” asked the girl, nearing the fire, whose warmth could not be felt a foot from the uneven brick hearth.

“He ain’t hardly ever, after six,” said Mit in a low, steady voice.

“And it is after six,—oh Mit! *do* get some supper.”

“Yes, Miss, I was just a-goin’ to,” replied the woman. “The rain has turned to snow; did you know it?”

“I’m sure I didn’t!” exclaimed Santy, going to the window, and peering out; “can’t see nothing. Ain’t you *never* going to cut over *two* slices, Mit?”

“Them’s orders, Miss. Your poor uncle knows to a crumb how much there is.”

“How long do you s’pose I shall live, Mit?”

“You’ll live as long as most folks, I suppose,” said Mit, stopping, in some surprise, midway between the table and the fire, her weird, glittering eyes fixed with painful intentness of vision on the girl.

“How old are *you*, Mit?”

“Going on fifty-one, Miss Santy; I was eleven when your uncle kindly took me. I’ve been here most forty years.”

“And you’ve seen that table, just as it looks, for forty years?”

“Dear me, Miss, yes,” replied the woman, knitting her thin brows.

“ And you’ve lighted the candle, ‘ cording ’ to orders, at seven, every night for forty years ? ”

“ Save moon-lights and summer-nights ; then it’s an hour later. Deary me, what loads of candles has been burnt, take it all together ! ”

“ And you’ve jest seen this old kitchen, and the yard, out doors, and the butcher Thursdays, and the baker Fridays, and my Uncle Simon, looking just so, day after day, for all that time ? Oh, Mit ! ” she cried, with a voice of anguish, “ I want to die ! ”

The girl bowed her head, and burst into a passionate fit of weeping. For this vision of her own monotonous future, and herself where Mit stood, at the end of it, overpowered her.

Mit took one step towards her, and two back again.

“ But it’s a home, Miss, it’s a home,” she muttered,—
“ and nobody to knock you down,—that’s worth a great deal.”

CHAPTER III.

THE REASON WHY.

"A wretched soul bruised with adversity
We bid be quiet when we hear it cry,
But were we burdened with like weight of pain,
As much, or more, we should ourselves complain."

At that moment something occurred that sent a shiver through Santy's thinly-clad frame, and caused her to throw her patched apron from her eyes with a look almost of terror.

The front-door closed with a bang. Shuffling footsteps sounded along the hall, and, as the kitchen-door opened, Simon Grue entered, his grey coat all powdered white with snow.

He was thinner and more wrinkled than when his cold eyes first sent a chill to Santy's heart, but to-night his face, though it was very pale, wore the nearest expression to a smile, that either Santy or Mit had ever seen.

"The weather is coldish," he said, as Santy drew further from the fire, and throwing his overcoat over one chair, he drew up another, an ancient, leathery-looking fossil, like himself, and taking from their corner two or three logs of respectable thickness, he placed them carefully on the coals.

Mit's wild eyes shone in the dark, as Santy looked over to her, where she stood cutting two slices more of the loaf for the old man's supper.

"Nothing for me, Mit, to-night, nothing for me," he said, turning his face toward the dull flare of the candle, which Mit had lighted. "I've had my supper. You and

the child can eat. I didn't mean to put on so much wood; it's clear waste; but never mind," he added, after an expressive silence; guess I can afford it,"—and he chuckled softly to himself.

Santy ate her two slices of bread with dry lips and burning eyes. She felt desperate as she sat there hungry and cold. She looked longingly towards the extra slices that Mit had left on the edge of the coarse delft plate, and once her hand actually crept forward to take them, but Mit's glittering eyes helped her to remember.

"I'm hungry!" she said petulantly. "Uncle Simon, may I have another slice?"

The man turned in his chair and looked at her; Mit's terribly bright eyes were nothing to bear in comparison with Simon's pitiless orbs.

"I have rules in this house," he said, steadily, and Santy shrank out of his sight, the hot tears rolling over her hungry cheeks. Presently Simon Grue left his seat.

"I think I'll go to bed airy," he muttered,—“and you rake down the fire, Mit, as soon as you've got through. I've a good ways to go to-morrow," he added with emphasis, "storm or no storm. There'll be a foot o' snow in the morning."

During this time he was busily shaking his overcoat, wiping his meagre face with his handkerchief, and nodding his head as if with comfortable self-assertion. He had probably made a good bargain. Presently he turned and left the room, and they could hear his steady tramp upstairs. "It seems to me master's queer," said Mit, after a long silence.

"He's an awful man," responded Santy,—“but I say, Mit, come herc."

Mit left the table; Santy, agile as a cat, rushed forward and filled both hands with the two slices.

"Now he may say what he pleases!" she cried, savagely, cowering over the fire; "I won't be hungry, and I *will* be warm, for once." Mit's face grew white with fear.

"Save us! but ye're overturning the house, and ruinin' me."

"I don't believe it will ruin you. Say I did it, and let him turn me out of the house. I don't care; I'll go down and work in the quarries,—I'll break stone,—I'll shovel snow,—I won't live this way any longer,—I won't! —I won't. There!" she added, with a heavy sigh, "the bread's all gone, and I could eat more, but I won't; so don't be frightened, Mit. Do you know why I wanted to die?" she queried, gravely, while Mit raked up the few glowing coals. "Because when I went down to the village and got late, that time I was sent for the doctor, I just crept up in the dark to one of those nice houses; and there I looked in the window. Oh, Mit! I saw such a fire there! and such a table! I never even dreamed that folks could live that way. There was a big loaf on the table, and the woman cut it all up, *all*! And then there was cake, and that was cut in big slices, and everybody had some, and the table was *heaped*! and there were children dressed, you can't think how fine! and everything was light, and grand, and happy. Ever since then I've felt so miserable;" and Santy bowed her head upon her hands in the old fashion.

"You'd better not feel nohow," was Mit's sententious reply. "I don't; I've forgot how," she added naively.

Santy looked at her, wondering vaguely whether there had been a time when Mit's yellow face had ever been stirred by any emotion, sorrowful or otherwise. For the first time in her life, those singularly shining eyes filled her with dread, and she crept upstairs softly behind her, and ran into her own room in the dark.

CHAPTER IV

THE MISER'S DEATH.

"Ambition, stop thy panting breath!
 Pride, sink thy lifted eye!
 Behold the caverns dark with death,
 Before you open lie;
 The heavenly warning now obey,
 Ye soul of pride, go watch and pray."

MIT's room was on the opposite side of the hall. During her many years of service she had contrived to gather a few comforts together. An old woollen horsc-blanket, much tattered, was spread out at the side of her bed. Two chairs, saved from the wreck of somebody's household, graced an old table at either end. A bit of broken looking-glass hung on the wall in which Mit often contemplated her own bright eyes.

Mr Grue slept in the third storey, in a room still less comfortable than either of the others, and directly over Santy's. What to other men would be the simplest necessities, were to him superfluities. He wanted none of them. His basin was the pump, on the west side of the house. Mit always had a towel hung for him, made out of an old flour sack. This was allowed to be removed once a month; soap was high, but sometimes Santy, who possessed an innate love of cleanliness, washed it in the river, back of the house, without soap. She loved to see clothes flying and fluttering from the bushes, even if they were wholly indebted to her imagination for form and comeliness. Her baby-things were very suggestive,—a few bits of rag, pieces of faded calico, all the old stocking-tops the house afforded.

Santy stationed herself at the window, to watch the little houses all alight.

"*They* didn't rake up before night," she muttered to herself, "and they are poor, and Uncle Simon is rich; the butcher says so. I wish he was poor, if he would only be generous. I wish,—oh, but that's wicked, I know! but I *do* wish he would die,—there!"

She shuddered with a silent horror, as even the soul with dim consciousness of right and wrong will, when it has violated one of the laws of God.

Santy did not know that in her heart she was a murderer, for no one had ever taken the pains to teach her the commandments, or any really definite duties towards God and man. She knew that the rules of the house contained a great many "Thou shalt not's," but all were arbitrary, selfish, and most of them unkind. She had never been inside the church doors, seldom heard even of God, save when old Mr Grue came home in one of his fits of anger, cursing and swearing. Mr Eggleston, the only clergyman in the place, declaring it shameful that a girl like Santy should grow up in such heathenish ignorance, had striven to influence the miser by appealing to his sense of shame, after he found it quite useless to talk to him of rights, privileges, and duties; but he made no impression on the flinty heart of the old man, who bade him, with an oath, go his way, and when he wanted him, he would send for him.

"But, my friend, it may be so that when you want me I can't come," said the minister in his mildest tones.

"Then I'll go to hell without you!" was the startling reply; and from that time forth the minister never entered Simon Grue's door while he lived.

"I never had a call during his life-time to go there again," the former said in allusion to the fact. "When

the rusty hinges of the old door creaked behind me, I felt that I was for ever expelled."

Santy crept into bed shivering, and shivering said the only prayer she had ever known, but to which she clung, and which clung to her from mere force of habit :—

"Now I lay me down to sleep,
I pray the Lord my soul to keep;
If I should die before I wake,
I pray the Lord my soul to take."

The words were rattled off glibly, with no sense whatever of their meaning, and then Santy pursued her cogitations, and arranged for the thousandth time how she would live if indeed her wicked wish should come to pass, and her uncle should die!

She would be warm, thoroughly warm, for once. "I'd pile the wood a foot high," she muttered between her fits of shivering; "I'd eat a whole loaf, and I'd walk a mile to get some butter. I'd boil all the tea there was in the house; I'd roast a lamb, and I'd have sugar and nice things, for *once!*" and the poor lonely child hugged herself with fond anticipation, while her brilliant imaginings kept her awake till the clock struck twelve.

Then she fell into a doze, and dreamed that in her wanderings about the old house she came to hidden places full of gold,—so full that the bright yellow metal shone through the chinks, and she was seized with a sudden fear in the possession of this, her uncle's secret. And presently the house was surrounded with thieves, and they attacked the doors and windows; and just as she, trembling with mortal terror, was on the point of flying to the great cellar under the house, she woke up,—and sure enough, somebody or something was knocking.

Thump, thump, thump! She rubbed her eyes and

roused herself into wakefulness. The noise was above her. It was her uncle knocking for her. Something was the matter. She had never known him rouse her that way but once before, and that was when the fever was coming on. What had happened now?

She sprang from the bed, and hastily putting on her clothes, she went into Mit's room for a light. She knew that her puny efforts would never awaken the woman, who was a heavy sleeper, so she groped her way to the matches,—of which Mit always kept a small supply,—lighted the candle, and proceeded, tremblingly, upstairs.

Her dream had unnerved her, and this, coupled with her habitual dread of the old man, made her nervously sensitive, so that the shadows of the bare room, caused by her flaring candle-light, seemed to bend forward and threaten her as she entered. The room was quite still, now, and she could only see the white, sinewy hand of the old man, resting on the dark, tattered counterpane. Creeping shrinkingly forward, she noticed that his cane had fallen on the floor, and that his right hand hung nerveless, uncovered to the shoulder, over the bed's side. Simon's hard, grey eyes were half open, so was his mouth. His lips looked shrunk, and a nervous contraction of the muscles somewhat distorted his face.

"Uncle," said Santy, softly, putting the lamp down on the floor, "uncle, did you call me?"

There was no answer; only a faint groan denoted that the old man heard her.

"What shall I do?" sobbed Santy, wringing her hands; "and there's nobody to help. Oh! what *will* I do? I can't wake Mit up, even if I should pull her out on the floor. I don't dare go away. Oh, what shall I do?"

"Santy," gasped the dying man, "box—box—I've—put it—I've—"

"Oh, uncle, uncle!" sobbed the girl, moving nearer.

"Santy—barn!" and the word died away in a low moan.

Santy gazed with wild eyes at the ashy features of the old man, as, gathering up all his energies, he threw himself forward to utter these words, and still endeavoured to shape his mouth to give incoherent directions. But never again was living speech to issue from the ashy lips. His head fell back,—there was an awful, ominous silence.

Santy's wish was realized; her uncle was dead. The light flickered and the shadows danced, but Santy stood transfixed with terror. What was it? what did it mean, this white and rigid silence? She had never seen death before, and all her soul shook with fear. She gave one bewildered glance about the great bare walls.

"I wished it!" she cried with horror; pressed her hands over her eyes; then, with a wild cry, she caught up the candle, and flew rather than ran down-stairs, to her own room, set the candle on the hearth, and crept into bed with all her clothes on, where she laid for an hour, weeping as if her heart would break.

Her wish was granted, but nothing could have made her more absolutely wretched. Her sense of right, feeble and blunted as it was, pricked her with accusations that were as unusual as they were hard to bear. A new presence seemed to have evolved itself out of the old consciousness; life would never seem free from care again. The row of lighted cottages came up to her mind's eye. Did such things ever happen there, she wondered, and how could people die without being sick? These matters she pondered until she fell into a troubled sleep.

CHAPTER V.

SANTY'S PURCHASES.

"Famine is in thy cheeks,
Need and oppression stareth in thine eyes,
Upon thy back hangs ragged misery.
The world is not thy friend, or the world's law."

THE sun had long been risen before Santy opened her eyes on the following morning. When she did so, she sat up in bed and tried to persuade herself that the incidents of the past night had been acted only in a hideous dream.

To satisfy herself, she sprang from her bed and crept softly upstairs. The door of the chamber had been left ajar, and, impelled by a curious fascination, she not only peered cautiously in, but went forward close to the bedside, but between him and the window.

"Yes, it is true!" she said in a hushed voice, "it is all true. Uncle Simon is dead—dead!"

Suddenly she espied a large wallet lying on the floor, and which had, doubtless, in the old man's struggles, fallen out of his clutch, or from under his pillow. In another moment it laid open in her hand. Money! she knew it was all money! Why, there must be thousands of dollars, she thought.

"Mit shan't see it, nobody shan't see it!" she said uneasily; "I'll keep it myself!" and she thrust it in her bosom; then, trembling from head to foot, she went down-stairs.

Mit was frying a bit of bacon. Santy's eyes brightened; a ravenous hunger possessed her.

"However the master went," said Mit, without turning round, "I don't know. There's no marks in the snow, and the chains of both doors are up. But gone he must be, for he took my candle, and it's never his way to sleep after sunrise. You heard him say he must take the journey, eh, child?"

Santy came towards the fire-place, the great secret palpitating in her strained and haggard eyes and under her bloodless lips. Mit glanced up, and then slowly arose from her knees, her glittering eyes looking more beady than ever.

"What's the matter of you, child?" she cried, in an altered voice. "You look—ever so!"

"I feel ever so, Mit!" was the solemn reply. "Is it wicked to wish anybody dead?"

"Indeed, it's wicked enough!" was the answer.

"Then, Mit, I'm awful! I wished my Uncle Simon was dead, and I'm—I'm—" she choked and burst into a passion of tears, Mit all the time glowering upon her with those strange, weird eyes.

Presently Santy threw down her apron. "Mit, Uncle Simon is dead! that's all," she said, half-sullenly.

"The girl is lost her wits!" muttered Mit.

"No, Mit, I haven't lost my wits. Last night about twelve I heard my uncle's cane; he pounded and pounded, and I waked up, dreaming that robbers were trying to get in. It was I took your light—I knew I couldn't wake you, for I never did; and I went upstairs. He was lying there, half off his pillow, and he said something about the barn, I don't know what, and then he—he—died. But, Mit, before I went to sleep, I just wished he was dead, and it's that makes me feel so bad."

She moved to the window, and looked out upon the thick snow, noting that great, feathery flakes were still

falling, that snow had tented in the trees, and buried the paths out of sight, and festooned all the fences with heavy white drapery, before Mit had recovered from the stupor with which the girl's words had thrown her. Presently Mit came and touched her on the shoulder.

"I don't understand," she said, knitting her brows; "is the master dead?"

"Yes, I told you he was dead," said Santy, half peevishly. "Go upstairs and see for yourself."

"Then, Miss," continued Mit, with an awed expression of countenance, "what's to become o' you and me? I've lived here this forty year, 'ginst the tenth of February."

"I don't know," said Santy, in a dull voice.

"He said he'd got a good ways to go to-morrow," muttered Mit with a scared look, "a good ways; and he's gone." Then she sat down and covered her face with her hands. She had not loved the old master; indeed, she had feared him, more or less, ever since she had been his faithful, obedient servant; but it was a woe unprecedented to her simple imagination to leave the old farm-house into whose habits she had grown, and go she knew not whither. That he had left any provision for her she did not so much as dream. "It ontwists me!" she muttered slowly; "it a'most ontwists body from soul. But I won't believe it.

"Go up and see, then," said Santy, stolidly.

"I can't, I can't! I can't believe it! I can't see it!" moaned Mit.

"Well, there's no use of groaning over it," said Santy, whose appetite was quickened by the woman's indifference to the breakfast. "Where's the bacon? I want plenty of it, and I'll cut it myself." Mit looked on apathetically.

If the master was gone who was to rule? not she. Clearly, if Santy wanted to cut the bacon she could not

interfere,—it was not her bacon ; nothing was hers. The poor creature felt herself a waif again, with neither home nor friend. In a blind, unreasoning fashion she had obeyed the master, just as a faithful dog would have done, doing exactly as he bade her, fearing to displease him, expecting no reward.

Santy, with her finer intelligence, had come to feel a positive repugnance towards her uncle. He had kept her in ignorance and indolence, half starved her—never shown the faintest appreciation of her many efforts to please him, never given her a word or even glance of affection. The shock to her nervous organization had betrayed her into tears and temporary wretchedness, but there was no mourning. She could not mourn for such a man.

The remembrance of her wish haunted her, hurt her, every time she thought of it. The knowledge that he was there in the house, upstairs in the forlorn room, *and yet not there*, gave her a half-childish uneasiness which she could not throw off.

The world was going God's way, as she stood there upon the threshold of a new future, but it seemed just now her way. She would eat, and drink, and be warm for a time, at least; nobody should stand between her and that comfort at present.

"Don't you want some bacon? Can't you *eat*?" queried Santy, her face showing the wonder she felt at poor Mit's weary shakes of the head. "Why, it seems as if I could never be done ; and oh, it tastes so good!"

"But what are we going to do, child?" queried Mit, hopelessly; "somebody must know. One of us will have to go to the village."

"It's Tuesday, and the butcher comes by to-day," said Santy, wondering in her mind what they should buy for dinner. She could not yet tell what that strange sense of

freedom meant. Monotony, with her, had been an evil, and she had longed to burst the fine threads of its invisible network that bound her so closely.

It was eight o'clock when the butcher's tall, white cart, seen in the distance, set Santy's pulses fluttering.

She said nothing to Mit of her wishes, but sat thinking as she looked out over the wide waste of glittering snow. The feather-like flakes had ceased to fall, and a burst of sunshine came in at the window, and made a bright track over the floor towards the fire-place.

Mit, with her usual carefulness, had placed one lean stick on the smouldering fire, and now she busied herself with the dishes, and the thoughts that had come of the to her great bereavement. The poor creature had gathered courage to go up and look in the door of the doubly-cold chamber; but one glance had sent her shivering downstairs, with her apron over her eyes,—those strange eyes that in sorrow or in gloom lost nothing of their brilliancy.

Mit let her towel fall as the high, white-topping waggon stopped before the window.

"You'll tell him, won't you?" she said, the tears falling like rain. "*I can't.*"

"Yes, I'll tell him," said Santy slowly, moving reluctantly towards the door.

The butcher, a large man, with red, sleepy-looking face, over which his thick wool comforter was fastened like a bandage, from mouth to ear, had already selected a small piece of inferior meat, and was on the point of leaving his cart, when Santy appeared on the great stone steps of the front door.

"Needn't bring it in," she said, raising her hand with an authoritative motion, then in a lower voice, as he paused, she added, "Uncle Simon is *dead*!"

"Sho! you don't say!" was the first expressive ex-

clamation. "When did the old man drop off? Sudden, wan't it?"

"Last night, about one o'clock," replied Santy.

"Sho! you don't say! well, that is curious, now; and you the only woman folk of the family. Well, I s'pose you'll want your dinner just the same."

She went close to the wheel, heedless that the snow was over her shoes.

"I want the biggest piece you've got in the cart!" she said, almost in a whisper.

A shrewd smile played round the man's small eyes.

"I see! I see!" he said; "p'r'aps a side o' lamb 'll do, or a good haunch of beef; both of 'em, if you say so. But then, if the old man is dead, who's to pay?"

"I'll pay you," was the confident reply.

"All right, Miss Santy, there'll be effects', of course, and there's money, of course,—and I hear the land's of great value.—I guess on the whole I'll let you have it. For forty years there ain't a piece of meat like them passed this door," he said, as he carried his burden in. "Sarvent, Mit,—well, wot's the orders?"

"I don't know what ought to be done, I'm sure," said Mit piteously.

"I was asleep when it happened; but Miss Santy saw it all. I noticed the old master looked worn and pale when he came home last night, but I little thought I'd hear such news in the morning." Mit shook her head, wiped the fast-falling tears, and sighed again.

"There'll have to be coroner's work, and all that," said the butcher. "I'll go straight to the village and tell Squire Hopkins. He knows what to do, and he'll probably be here by noon. Look at the child!" he half chuckled, as Santy threw on log after log of the hard green wood—"first time I ever saw a fire as *was* a fire in

this house. I'll see to things," he added with a wise nod, and left the house.

Mit surveyed Santy's purchases in dumb astonishment.

"Plenty of potatoes, and lots of meat to-day for dinner, Mit," Santy said sententiously.

"Miss Santy, you'll surely be sick!" Mit responded. "What will I do with all that meat? What would your poor dead-and-gone uncle say at such extravagance?"

"Never mind, now, Mit," said Santy, soothingly. "Maybe he didn't know that I was half-starved all the time; and I'm going to have everything I want. Put the meat somewhere,—it'll keep this cold weather. Now I'm going out to get in all the wood I can lay in the corner; I don't think that big pile has been sold yet, and I mean to be warm."

"Dear save us!" muttered Mit, following the fluttering rays of the girl's dress out of sight; "what's come over her? She takes on like a woman o' twenty, an' acts the mistress exactly as if she knew how; I can't understand it at all,—nor what's to become of either of us. It's too much of a twist."

The news was soon spread about the little village, and in a few hours several persons came to the house, the man they called Squire Hopkins taking the lead. Among them shone the serene, saintly face of Mr Eggleston the minister, who, now that the poor rich man had gone to his last account, felt called to enter the doors that had neither chained nor bolted death from the miser's house.

He found Santy curled up in the kitchen-hearth watching the fire with dumb-animal content.

At sight of him she sprang to her feet, and threw back her thick, untidy locks. Her eyes fell before his mild, sorrowful gaze. In his presence she seemed to lose confidence in herself. She felt ashamed of her rags and

patches; an undefined sense of guilt and unhappiness troubled her.

Gravely and cautiously he questioned her, and she told him minutely all the particulars of her uncle's death. Looking into his eyes, so large and loving, a strange sense of her terrible past of loneliness and suffering took possession of her mind, and the tears fell fast, and sobs shook her slight frame.

"My poor child, I commend you to God in this trouble," he said kindly, his heart bleeding for one so doubly desolate. "We will talk the matter over among ourselves, and see what can be done. Meantime, I will send my daughter here with a mourning outfit; she has one which she wore when her mother died, three years ago, and the child was just your height. Don't sob so, my dear; friends will be raised up to you in this hour of trial. Now you are sure you have told me everything?" She stopped her sobs for a moment, and looked up in his face.

"No, I haven't told you everything," she said chokingly. "I wished he would die, that very night before I went to sleep, and here,—here,—" she tugged at her dress, "is a pocket-book I found on the floor; it's chuck full of money,"—and heaving one deep, convulsive sigh, she let it fall into his hands. He looked at it perplexed for a moment.

"I have nothing to do with this," he said quietly, "but as the other gentlemen have gone, if you have a box with a key to it, I will lock it and put it away till such time as it is needed. I see there is a receipt here for two thousand dollars, also that he sold a piece of land adjoining the grave-yard down by the quarries, yesterday. I will just take down the amount, and the facts,—perhaps it will be better."

Mit came forward with a box of which she had always kept the key. It was labelled "household expenses," and

contained the little money the old man had deposited there for the week.

Mr Eggleston laid the pocket-book in the box and saw it put on the upper shelf of the spacious and nearly empty closet, and then he took his leave, promising that some one should be sent over to lodge in the house that night, as Santy declined to leave it, even to stay in one of those little cottages, the inmates of which she was perhaps never to envy more. "They've put him in the parlour," whispered Mit, after Mr Eggleston had left. "There's two chairs and a table there; he's on the table."

"When will he be buried?" asked Santy.

"To-morrow, I expect, and then where shall we go to?"

"Go to? why stay here, of course; what's the use of talking about going anywhere? We'll have real good times, Mit. I'll be the lady of the house, and you can keep on just the same, only *I* shall give the orders. And we'll burn that wood-pile out by the shed, every stick of it, for I mean to be warm. Every night we'll sit here just as long as we please, with a splendid fire, and maybe somebody will see that we have good clothes and plenty to eat. I don't feel worried."

"Bless you, child," said Mit, with a twinkle of her lustrous little eyes, "maybe after the will's read we *can't* stay here. We don't know who'll git the house and all the property. He's got relations enough, I warrant."

"Nobody but me," said Santy; "there was my own father was his only brother, and I've often heard him say that if he died there'd be nobody of his own to come to his funeral but me. Oh, I wish I'd loved him! I wish he had let me love him."

"I guess he liked you pretty well," said Mit, wiping her eyes, "but for all that we don't know as we can stay here, either of us."

CHAPTER VI.

RUTH.

“And she is fair, oh, very fair!
 Her eyes so like the dove;
 And lightly bears her world of care
 Upon our arms of love.”

MR EGGLESTON'S study waxed redder and brighter as the twilight faded with the earlier evening. It was a snug room, lined with book-shelves, with crimson curtains at the windows. On many a little bracket stood slender vase, or delicate statuette. A few vines grew over a picture that hung above the fire-place, the face of a beautiful saint, Ruth Eggleston. In losing her the minister had lost all that made earth really attractive to him. Since she had gone, he lived half in heaven. Perhaps it was best that it should be so.

There was a bay-window in the study. I should like to write a poem on the bay-window and its capabilities. In this one lived flowers and birds, and tender, delicate plants. Often through the day while the minister wrote, Ruth Eggleston, whose face was so like her mother's, pure, and bright, and patient, sat there with her dainty work-basket, and stitched some household linen. It was her pride to make all her father's shirts, and to iron them. And it was a great pleasure to him to have her near him with her ready smile and quick appreciation. How often the words fell upon her ear, making her so proud and happy,—

“What do you think of this sentence, dear?” or “shall I read you what I have written?”

To-night, Mr Eggleston sat in his comfortable green

arm-chair opposite the ruddy grate. The door opened, and Ruth glided in.

"I have got the things altogether, papa," she said, in a low, sweet voice, going towards him, and bringing her little sewing-chair nearer the fire. "The gown is in very good order, and I had but little mending to do to the other things. I hope they will fit that poor child. Now tell me about her; how old is she?"

"Really, I can't say," her father replied; "she looks to be thirteen or fourteen."—"And is she pretty?"

"No, my dear; not what you and I call pretty, but she has an interesting face, which under better conditions may develop into beauty. To tell the truth, she seemed like one starved, body and soul, as I doubt not she has been all the years she has lived in that man's house."

"But was he really as miserly as they say? I remember the house—stained all over; with shutters hanging, and window-glass gone; a dreadfully lonesome place, and almost always shut up. What did that poor child do with herself? Do you believe I shall like her, papa? I should think constant companionship with such people, and such surroundings, would dwarf a child's nature, and make her mentally morose and unhealthy."

"No doubt she has been injured more or less, but sympathy is all she wants now," said Mr Eggleston, smoothing the soft curls that fell to his knee. "I think the poor child is somewhat beyond the average of girls at her age; her answers were rather intelligent, and, most wonderful fact of all, she seems to have a conscience."

"Oh, papa!"

"I put it down as a remarkable case, my dear, that her conscience is not stone-blind and deaf. Why, Ruth, the child has been brought up a veritable heathen. I don't think she knows anything about God, or is aware that she

even has a soul. But you will see her for yourself, to-morrow, and I have no doubt your sympathy will do much for the poor little creature. Remember, she is wholly unformed. I think the old man told me once, that she knew her letters, which he had taught her in some idle moments of her earlier years, when she was more of a plaything, and less of a burden."

"But what will become of her now,—how will she live?" asked Ruth. "She surely cannot stay in that dreadful place alone."

"That problem is to be solved after we learn what disposition is made of the old gentleman's property. If no will is found, and he had no other relatives, everything of course goes to the niece. Somebody must know who was his man of business, and of course there is money. A strangely sad or happy future is in store for this child, who, in plain English, has all to be made over."

"I am inclined to think I shall like her," said Ruth, thoughtfully. "I hope you will," her father responded.

A far different scene was disclosed in the old farmhouse kitchen that same evening. Carpetless and curtainless as it was, the vivid colour of the fire, and the strange content in the face of the girl who crouched down before it, made the cheerless place look more like home than it ever had before.

An apple was roasting on the hearth, and Santy watched it with glowing cheeks. It was seldom Santy tasted fruit, and this to her was a feast in prospect. Great logs were heaped against the chimney-back, and the girl seemed to drink in the genial warmth at every pore. Sometimes, for the sake of contrast, she would rise and look out of the window on the cold, snow-covered landscape, glittering under the light of an early moon.

In the parlour,—an extemporized screen between them

and the miser,—two watchers sat; a table beside them, on which stood cold meat and bread. Newspapers and books lightened their solitary vigils. Into that room Santy had not allowed herself to go since *he* had been carried there. Mit sat on the opposite side of the kitchen fire-place. Her eyes, unused to such prodigality of flame, travelled uneasily from the fire-light to the candle on the table. "Hadn't we better put the candle out?" she queried anxiously; "the fire lights the room plentifully."

"No, Mit; I'm going to sit here till that candle burns out, and then I'm going to take one upstairs and let that burn. I tell you, I'm going to have just as much light, and fire, and food as I can get,—to pay up," she added in an under-tone.

"It seems like extravagance, Miss Santy, that's all," sighed Mit softly.

"Now, Mit, don't *you* go to being a miser; if you do, I shall find out some dreadful way to punish you!" said the child gravely. "I hate 'em!"

"Dear me, Miss, no!" responded Mit simply, "only that I'm in the habit of it that it's hard to learn newness."

"I sh'd like to know where uncle is gone?" said Santy, after a long pause; "they go somewhere, don't they?"

"They! who?" asked Mit, with a start.

"Folks what's dead," Santy made brief answer. "You told me so when my little bird died; you said birds didn't, but folks did."

"Yes, folks do, I've heard. I ain't had no eddication to speak of; but when mammy died, and then I was littler than you, the minister said she'd gone to heaven. There I stop; I don't know where heaven is."

Santy clapped her hands softly; then she bent over and just saved the rich juices of the red and yellow apple as she turned it; then she went to clapping her hands again.

"Because I can go to places now," she said, in a voice full of music, "because I can go to the church and hear *him*. I just love him for the sweet eyes he's got, and the way he spoke to me. *Did* you hear him call me '*dear*'? It's the first time in all my life that anybody ever called me '*dear*'; even my mother *never* did,—she called me Sarah; but my sweet, pretty little sister,—she couldn't speak plain, you know,—so I was '*Santy*,' and Santy I want to be always." Mit nodded her head, and the crows'-feet lengthened along her cheeks till her eyes looked like two bits of phosphorus.

"Oh, and I want to know things! how shall I do it, I wonder? It frightens me to think of it. Somebody will give me clothes. I'm to have a suit of mourning, you know. Dear me! what shall I look like? Mit, is heaven where *he* is gone?" she asked, after a long pause.

"Miss, I don't know nothing about them things," said Mit reflectively; "I get twisted, sometimes, thinking about it. Ask the minister; he can tell you everything."

The apple was done, and Santy generously divided it; but Mit refused to share with her, so Santy finished the dainty herself, and smacked her lips.

True to her determination, she alternately dozed and waked till the candle had burnt down to its socket, Mit composedly sleeping in her corner, until finally slumber overtook her, curled up like the little animal she was, and the night wore away.

Mit awoke in the grey morning, stiff and sore, and much surprised to find herself where she was, while Santy had crept farther and farther towards the ashes, till it seemed a wonder she had not caught fire from the still smouldering coals. Mit caught her by the shoulder. Santy waked up at once.

"What are you going to have for breakfast?" she asked.

CHAPTER VII.

“WHO IS GOD?”

“But there is a ray
 More delightful still,
 Beams that softlier play,
 Looks that sweetlier thrill;
 ’Tis the eye where light
 Sparkles from the heart.”

MR EGGLESTON took Ruth with him on the occasion of his next visit to Stoneyhedge. As they came in sight of the desolate house, Ruth called her father’s attention to what she thought was a frolicsome dog rolling in the snow.

It proved to be Santy, who, as soon as she caught sight of them, uttered an expressive “oh!” and ran into the house by another way.

“What an odd child it must be!” said Ruth, laughing, and lifting her bundle as her father sprang out of the sleigh.

The door was opened for them by some invisible hand. Santy hid behind it as they entered, then followed bashfully into the kitchen. Mit was working about, as usual. Mr Eggleston left the women folks to themselves, and Santy stood by the fire, gazing shyly at her visitor, wondering at, and vaguely rejoicing in her beauty.

“Do you rub your cheeks with snow?” was the first question that saluted Ruth, as she slowly unpinned the bundle.

“No; what makes you ask?” Ruth rejoined. She felt like laughing heartily, for the place seemed as unlike a house into which death has entered, as it well could.

“’Cause they’re so red,” said Santy. “I rub mine

sometimes to make 'em red, but the fire does it now. I'm going to burn *all* the wood in uncle's pile; it will take a year, I s'pose, but I'm going to do it. I wonder if you can see our windows where you live? I make 'em bright in the night, I tell you. *Can you?*"

"No, I don't think we can," said Ruth, shaking out a black frock, in the neck of which she had sewn a dainty little frill of white muslin. Santy drew a sigh of deep content. "That's for me, I suppose," she said.

"Yes, all these are for you to wear to your uncle's funeral, and to keep, if you will take care of them," said Ruth, bringing to light several garments.

"They're nice enough to go to church in, ain't they?"

"Yes, indeed; and you must try to go to church. You shall come in my Sunday-school class, and I hope we shall have good times."

"Do you give 'em anything to eat?" queried Santy.

"Oh, no!" Ruth said, suppressing a smile. "We only give spiritual food, my dear. You will understand what that means one of these days, I hope."

"I hope so," said Santy, fervently. "I don't know anything now."

Then Ruth instructed her what to do, gave her a bright little lesson on the duties of cleanliness and taste in dress, and sent her upstairs to array herself. When she came down again, Mit held up both hands in mute astonishment.

"If ever I see a ladier-like one!" she fervently exclaimed. Ruth looked her over with shining eyes; it seemed something like a creation of her own. The bright, smooth hair, inclined to curl a little at the ends, the comely features, the wide forehead, unusually broad and full, the neat, trim little figure that hardly recognized itself as it stood there, trying to look dignified, made a touching picture.

"Why, you look nice enough to kiss!" said Ruth, with a smile. "Nobody ever kissed me as I know of!" said Santy, gravely.

"You poor, forlorn little creature!" cried Ruth, with moist eyes, and stooping down, she took her in her arms, and kissed her twice.

Santy drew a long, wondering breath. Her cheeks were like June flowers. She felt as if some sacred influence had been breathed upon her. There *was* something to crave beside wood and fire. Santy had taken her first taste of love! If Ruth had been beautiful to her vision before, she was more and better than that now. Santy did not know what the word meant, or she would have called her an angel.

Ruth's spirit yearned over the forlorn girl. Years before she had a little sister, a sweet, frail blossom that rejoiced the hearts at the old parsonage for a few brief summers, and then laid down the burden of life with a smile, and went to a fairer garden to bloom. What was there in Santy to bring up the remembrance of violet eyes, and golden tresses?

"I don't suppose," thought Ruth, and the tears came again, "that she is in the least like dear Lilly, but why does she make me think of her?"

"Must I keep them on?" asked Santy.

"Yes, keep them on, if you like, but be very careful of them. Don't roll in the snow," she added, laughing.

"Do you want to know what I rolled in the snow for?" queried Santy, with a grave glance.

"Yes, if you will tell me."

"I wanted to be so *sure* that there really was a big fire in the kitchen; so I thought the best way was to get cold, as I used to do, and then I should be certain. It don't seem as if I was ever warm before, in my whole life."

"Then you must thank God for these great blessings," said Ruth, after a little pause; for in that speech she seemed to see the child's whole desolate, unloved life, and something choked her as she thought of it.

"Who is God?" asked Santy.

"My dear child, don't you know?" cried Ruth, her features assuming an expression almost of horror.

"I've heard Uncle Simon call God to damn his soul, but I always thought it was something wicked," said the child, all unconscious of the dreadful nature of the words she repeated.

"It *was* wicked,—frightfully wicked!" said shuddering Ruth, to whose unaccustomed ears profanity was inexpressibly infamous; "and you must never even repeat such words,—sometime I will tell you why. See!"—she led the girl to the window—"look at all these wonderful things; the sky so blue and shining, the snow, white as crystal, the hills, the river. Remember the green grass and red roses of last summer; who do you suppose made them all? Look at your hand,—how wonderful and beautiful it is!—who do you think made all these things, and gave you life?"

Ruth's beautiful faith reacted with healthy power upon the subtle, craving instincts of the ignorant nature she had taken in hand. The great spiritual law of affinity through which mind acts upon mind, and which God has given solely for the purpose of bringing all nature into harmony with him, attracted Santy's unformed judgment and prepared it for enlightenment.

"Was it God?" asked the child reverently,—“and where is He? where does He live? have you seen Him?"

"In one way I have seen Him, Santy, and so may you; when I look at all the lovely things He has created, I see how good, and great, and beautiful He is. And if we try

to love Him, and live as He would have us, He sends a holy, beautiful spirit to live in our hearts."

"He *does*?" queried the child, breathless with a sort of awe mixed with delight. "Do you suppose Uncle Simon knew Him?"

"I'm afraid not, my dear," said Ruth, unwillingly. "Everybody who knew Simon Grue, knew him to be an evil man, who had bidden the highest interest of his soul against the greed for gold which had so dwarfed and deformed his nature."

The conversation might have gone on for hours, but Mr Eggleston came in with the information that everything was arranged for the afternoon services, and Ruth reluctantly took leave of her new protégé, promising to call again.

And Santy, after she had gone, moved restlessly about the kitchen, "thinking out."

CHAPTER VIII.

SILENT TOM.

"A daring infidel, and such there are,
Of all earth's madmen most deserves a chain."

"There was a look of calmness in her thin
And delicate features, wasted to a shade
Like a pure spirit, musing on the dark,
And sad afflictions of this life below."

"WELL, what do you make of her, my pet?" asked the minister. "Oh, papa!" and Ruth turned sparkling eyes upon him, "I never was quite so interested in any one in my life. It's beautiful!"

"A beautiful case of depravity?" queried the minister, smiling.

"Now, papa, you needn't try to curb my enthusiasm in the least. You know very well what I mean, and that I dislike pert girls who know everything, and I don't think the child is a heathen at all; she is simply utterly ignorant," added Ruth, half laughing.

"I know you will do her good, darling," said Mr Eggleston, touching the off-horse with his whip, "and I will give you every opportunity in my power to help the child. We have been looking over the old man's papers this morning, and Miss Santy, as they call her, is likely to come into something like a fortune, after all, if no nearer relative should be found. We have footed up some ten thousand, beside the house and land. Of course, the farm is not worth much as a farm, being very sterile, with the exception of a few wood-lots, but they say it's a splendid mine of free-stone. So you see you have *somebody* to work for."

"Papa," said Ruth gravely, "she would be somebody, if she were left without a cent. I hope no considerations of money enter into my calculations. The child to me is wonderfully interesting."

"I don't doubt it, my dear, but there's the parsonage, —and,—whoa!" he drew the reins nervously tight.

At the bend of the street stood a man making gestures as if he would speak with the minister. His tall, majestic figure, firm-set lips, resolute eye, stern, almost commanding features, made up a presence such as one sees sometimes in places of trust and power in populous cities, but seldom in the more contracted walks of towns and villages. He was dressed in a short, loose sack, that someway seemed to suit well with the passive, grand manner of the man.

Colours fit character, and this "fellow," as some might call him, assimilated with the heavy grey fabric of thick twilled cloth that loosely swathed the large limbs.

That the man was a thinker, earnest, intense, fiery and passionate in debate, the lines in his strong, handsome face, the firm pressure of his lips, and the brooding, introverted expression of his large eyes gave sufficient evidence.

His hands, the slight stoop in his shoulders, indicated that he laboured hard for a living. He was a man not yet thirty, and nothing was known of his previous life—he had not been long in Winterswood,—except that he had been heard to say with great bitterness, that he "begun the world wrong." He was probably one of that great throng who start with the impression that they are destined to be a power in society, and shape the destinies of their fellows. Self-made and self-helping, he meant, perhaps, to make men conform to his theories, but found them obstinate, and himself unable to work because of poverty. He came nearer the sleigh, his heavy feet

crunching the snow. "You are Doctor Eggleston, I believe?" he said in a subdued voice.

"They call me so," replied the minister, smiling, "but I am only plain Mr Eggleston."—"I'm Tom Warwick."

"What, Silent Tom?" ejaculated the minister.

"That's what my mates call me some times," replied the man, smiling.

"You're at present working in the Ross quarry?"

"Yes, sir, I head the gangs there."

"Then of course you're the boss."

"At present, yes, sir. My wife, sir, is anxious to see the minister; she's a bit low-spirited and nervous, I'm thinking; though, you'll excuse me, sir, I'm afraid she's got some strange religious notions in her head. My little woman is good enough for me as she is."

As he glanced up, Silent Tom's face seemed all aglow with light and love, transfigured with a splendid pride.

The minister smiled, but a pained look shot across his face a moment afterward. "Where do you live, Mr——"

"Call me Tom, if you please, sir," said the man, bluntly; "I'm known by that all over. I live in the block yonder, the house with a stoop; you can see it from here."

"Yes; and your wife wishes me to call, does she? I have a little time on hand; shall I call now?"

"Any time that suits you, sir, will suit me," was the reply, and the man bowed as he left them, walking easily and swiftly down the opposite road.

"Oh, papa! there's something delightful coming out of this, I am sure," said Ruth, who had been speculating somewhat superficially upon the chance meeting.

"I hope it is some poor sinner coming to the Saviour," said her father, gravely. "One such fact as that is worth more to me than all the romances that underlie this seemingly prosaic life."

"How came you to think I had any idea of a romance?" asked Ruth, flushing a little.

"Because I know young things like you are always conjuring up some utopia, whenever matters happen a little out of the common way."

"But Silent Tom, as you call him, is certainly a very remarkable man, in appearance, at least."

"He is a remarkable man, and a very dangerous man. He is working the enginery of Satan, and holds many a heart, as it were, in his hands. They call him a free thinker. I call him a free scoffer; the truly religious man is the free thinker."

"If the truth shall make you free, you are free indeed. Tom is a hater of God."

Ruth was silent. To her this was terrible news. When they gained the door, she said, "May I go in with you?"

"Certainly, if you wish it. I always like to have you along," replied her father.

They stopped before the house designated; one of a row,—one of that very row towards which poor Santy, up in the far off lonesome chamber, had looked so longingly,—and differing in its dreary conformity to the others only by the stoop, which Silent Tom had pointed out. There were a few flowers in the window, and between the rich, green leaves, a face,—a child's face, Ruth thought,—looked out, pure, tender, and delicate as a lily foliated in marble, white as drifted snow.

A little girl came to the door, dressed in coarse check, but clean and tidy; so Silent Tom, it seemed, could afford help for that little wife of his.

"Won't you please to walk in, sir?" she said, and going before, ushered them into the tiny parlour which was sweet with the fragrance of heliotrope, that bloomed amidst a little parterre of mosses, geraniums and roses in the

window-seat. Presently a door opened, and a slight, pretty figure came gracefully forward.

The little maid had told her that the minister had called.

Ruth and her father were both astonished at the grace and comeliness of this sweet vision, and the air of superior breeding indicated by her manner. The touch of her hand lingered long on Ruth's palm, for she felt instinctively that in this humble row of tenement houses, she had found an equal in more than the mere essentials of dress and manner. "I have wanted to see you, sir, a long time," she said, seating herself, and addressing the minister.

"Do you object to my daughter's presence?" asked Mr Eggleston. The little lady cast a long, lingering glance towards Ruth. "No," she said, with a decided shake of the head; "oh, no!"

"Because Ruth is almost my second self," said the minister, smiling.

"I am glad she came. Did my husband call on you?"

"We were riding home when we met him; he told me you wished to see me."

"Dear Tom!" she said, smiling a little sadly, "I wish I dared tell him everything, but I know his prejudices are so violent that it makes me tremble to think what consequences might result if I did. Sir, you have preached directly to my heart for many weeks. Your sermons revived old, half-forgotten impressions which haunted me when I was a child, and I have thought and pondered here, all alone by myself, till it seems as if a new light has broken in all about me, and all my fears of death, all my solitary feelings, my nervous forebodings have gone. Dear sir, what is it? Do you really think I have found the Saviour whom you preach? Am I so happy as to be forgiven, and accepted of God for His sake?"

She had clasped her hands in her almost passionate

earnestness, and her blue eyes were brighter than their wont with the tears that welled up to their lids.

The minister was surprised at the purity and clearness of her diction, and said to himself,—“This is no common woman!” while Ruth, as much astonished as her father, wondered not that the face of Silent Tom took on a sudden splendour when he spoke of her.

“I was frightened at first, sir,” she continued, earnestly, “when this new life so filled and overflowed my heart, as if it were in some way a disloyalty to Tom, for I felt it was impossible he should share it, with *his* views;” her voice trembled.

“Your husband has no sympathy, then, with your religious experience,” said the minister.

“He hates everything of the kind with mortal hatred,” she answered in a very low voice. “And oh! sir,” she went on, “he is so good, for all that; so noble, conscientious, honest, and painstaking to do just right; he so despises meanness and deception, that I often think him nearer the truth than I am, for I woefully deceived him from the first.”

Ruth started and turned a little pale.

“For you see,” she continued, her glances still bent downward, “I was educated by an aunt who was at the time wealthy. She spared no expense to perfect me in all the branches of polite literature; she wanted me to be accomplished, because she fancied my lot was to be thrown in thornless places, and I believe she made me her idol. But in a financial crisis she was ruined. She died and left me dependent. A few friends succeeded in finding me a situation in a school, but by constitution I was not fitted for the exhausting duties of a teacher. My health utterly broke down; long months of illness succeeded, and when I was partially restored to health, I was glad of any shelter.

I found a home, in consideration of some domestic service, as an equivalent, in the family of a Mrs Ledger, who kept a large boarding-house. There I first saw my husband. He took me for a servant, and indeed that was my station. I found him intelligent, thoughtful, and a self-made scholar in a good degree. At the same time I saw how violent his prejudices were; that he hated cant, as he considered all professions of religion; that he disliked to see women accomplished, or fine, as he called it,—but his love for me was honest and sincere. I can truly say I did not marry him wholly for the sake of a home, homeless, and friendless, and an orphan though I was. I loved him as truly as he loved me, but I deceived him, for he does not know to this day that my knowledge of languages and the classics is much beyond his, or that my passion for music is such that my heart aches for the smallest opportunity to express it. And now I have another secret to bear; how can I tell him all these things, when I have often and often heard him say that he would not even forgive his wife if she had intentionally deceived him. It has been a miserable, miserable load to carry!” she added, the tears beginning to fall, “and my health is sinking under it.”

Ruth thought of the glorified face by the way-side.

“Tell it all,” she said impulsively; “I’m sure he won’t care; I’m sure he loves you too dearly.”

Mr Eggleston sat in deep thought.

“You are kind to say so,” half whispered the little woman,—and she looked so helpless, and pretty, that Ruth longed to kiss her,—“but the dread hangs over me just the same. If you knew what the words “confidence,” and “trust” meant to Tom! And then his deep-seated hatred of all religious things! He has even been colder to me when I came from church, though before our marriage I stipulated that I was to go as often as I

wished. It is all so very wretched."—"It is your duty, my dear madam, to have no secrets from your husband," said Mr Eggleston gently.

"I know I ought to feel so, to think so,—but there is such a dread hanging over me ;" and she shuddered.

"Trust the Master. He careth for His own. If you have truly passed from death unto life, you need fear no evil. The Psalmist says,—

"His rod and His staff they comfort me."

"If I could only trust *Him*, wholly!" she exclaimed,—"only throw myself wholly aside, and let Him work in and through me! but I am still mortal, and so sensitive that sometimes every nerve is a torturing pain. And yet I know I love Christ, and He loves me," she added, her face brightening.

"Couldn't somebody else tell him, papa? couldn't you?"

"That's a bright thought, my pet," said the minister, who had sat thinking, a shade of deep perplexity darkening his face,—“quite a happy thought. What do you say to it, madam?" Mrs Warwick, for that was the name Silent Tom had given her, thought the matter over for some moments in silence.

"It perplexes me to decide," she said, after a brief pause; "I am habitually a coward, I believe," she added with a sad little smile, "but I do feel braver, and better, and lighter-hearted, since I have seen you."

"Your husband seemed to feel no repugnance to speaking to me, or inviting me to your home; you must remember that, Mrs Warwick."

"He rather likes you, sir, personally, and he fancies I am a little weak in the nerves. He don't once think what tremendous results hang on this meeting. He has such confidence in me and in himself that he is sure he can argue down my lowness of spirits, and, as he expressed

it, 'that your visits would do me no harm.'—"I don't think *I* should fear," said Ruth, shaking her head wisely. Mrs Warwick smiled faintly, as she looked at Ruth, radiant in blooming health.

"You have never known the prostrating effects of illness and trouble," she said. "It is not that I am afraid of Tom, but his judgment, his immaculate idea of truth, his high sense of honour. But no doubt the time will come when I shall be willing to tell him all, or let my friends speak for me."

Mr Eggleston rose to go, and Ruth begged her new friend to come to the parsonage. "Every time you feel in doubt or trouble," she added sweetly.

"What a curious interview it has been!" said Ruth, as they drove away, "and what a strange story! After all, there was a romance. Do you blame her, papa, for concealing her acquirements from her husband?"

"Yes, my dear, it is always safest to be frank, even to our own injury. I don't believe in questions of policy and expediency. Tom is a bitter man when his prejudices are assailed, and it is just possible that he may distrust her motives in the future, and continual watching is not conducive to domestic happiness. The matter looks rather serious to me."

"But according to her showing, Tom is not a bad man."

"Oh, no; in his way he is quite as righteous as a Pharisee, but he is a bitter hater of the religion of Christ. Finding that his perseverance in arguments sometimes produced quarrels, he has made up his mind never to speak upon religious matters in a promiscuous way; that is why he goes by the name of 'Silent Tom,' but he has hired a little place that is called the Freestone Hall, from its proximity to the quarries, and there he, with a chosen few, meet to discuss all sorts of matters prejudicial to the

pure doctrines of our Lord. Silent Tom is doing an immense deal of harm, and leading young men captive. He is so brilliant, so original, and so well read in his particular line, that his assertions are looked upon as more wonderful than the revealed truths of the Scriptures."

"What a dreadful character!" said Ruth. "One can hardly be surprised that his sweet little blossom of a wife is afraid of him. Still I am quite confident he loves her dearly."

"Yes, if anything can lead him back to the fountain of truth, it will be that same little wife of his. I have noticed her several times when she has seemed to be quite overwhelmed with mental anguish."

"It is good to be afflicted," said Ruth, but the lips said it. Her feet had never neared the terrible furnace. What if she should be called in her youth and beauty to hold to her lips the bitter waters of suffering? What if the shadow from the upper heaven, behind which were hidden God's gracious purposes, was even now preparing to fall upon and cloud over her strong young life?"

"I'll step in and get a lunch," said the minister, as he stopped at his gate, "and then, after Bob has had a feed of oats, I'll go up to Grue's. How about bringing the child back with me?"

Ruth's eyes were lifted to the second storey windows, from which the curtains were drawn.

"O, papa?" she cried joyfully, "George has come! I know I saw his face."

CHAPTER IX.

THE FIRST SHADOW.

"If Jesus came to earth again,
 And walked and talked in field, in street,
 Who would not lay his human pain
 Low at these heavenly feet?

And leave the loom, and leave the lute,
 And leave the volume on the shelf
 To follow Him, unquestioning, mute,
 If 'twere the Lord himself."

"HASN'T George come?" cried Ruth, as Aunt Polly came to the door. Aunt Polly was tall, gaunt, and respectable, and Scotch. Her caps were marvels of purity, not to say of composition. How they stood as they did on the top of her brown "front" without toppling over, passed the comprehension of all her friends. But it was always there. Whenever and wherever one might chance to see Mistress Riggs, they saw that wonderful combination of ruffles, and ribbons, and clear starching, standing like a steeple over Aunt Polly's beetle brows.

"Weel, weel, you're sae flustered, Miss Ruth, I'll warrant ye don't know whether ye bide here or not. Set ye down and take breath; yes, Mr George has come. I was joost doostin' out the parlour, when I heard his trunk landed on the porch. But he's nae looking just the thing, Miss Ruth,—he's nae lookin' like himsel'."

"What do you mean, Polly?" queried Ruth impatiently.

"It was your sainted mother's fashion to ca' me *Aunt* Polly," said Miss Riggs, with a prim nod of her steeple-cap.

"Well, Aunt Polly, do tell me. Why isn't he down-

stairs? How long has he been here? Is he sick?" — "Heck! heck! ye're puttin' mair questions than I can answer wi' a' fairness. I gi'e him a word of advice, and he's been takin' a screed o' sleep after his long journey. It may be he's aunly tired,—let us hope so for a' sakes, Miss Rooth. And now don't ye be frettin', for the Lord works i' His ain way, and what we puir mortals can't see, He can. Go wipe the snow off yer shoon, or ye'll mayhap take cold, too. Yes,"—she nodded her cap again at a look from Ruth,— "that's him a coughin'; I just think there's a churchyard soun' in it."

"Oh, don't!" half sobbed Ruth, and hastily went into the parlour, and sat down on the sofa, trembling, shivering from head to foot with an unspoken dread. As she looked drearily about the room, her eye fell upon a pretty little card which one of her scholars had painted for her, and the text on which she had selected for one of her test lessons:—

"WHOM THE LORD LOVETH HE CHASTENETH."

She remembered how she had dilated upon the words; in what well-chosen language she had described the different kinds of chastisement which mortals were called upon to bear; how to some were portioned martyrdom, and to others poverty; to still others sickness, suffering, and death. She recalled the question of the youngest girl in her class, a thoughtful little creature with the sweetest blue eyes that were ever seen.

"Would *you* think whatever suffering came, that God had sent it?" And her answer, the solemnity of which thrilled her own nerves as she spoke,— "Indeed I should, my dear, and perhaps nothing else would help me to bear it."

George had been her devoted friend and lover ever since she could remember. They were to be married as soon as he received his first call, and he had written her within a week that a church in Bradley had sent for him,

and after his trial-sermon pronounced in his favour. This would have been delightful news, but for what followed.

“My last year’s cough has attacked me again, with some serious symptoms, but I think I shall get better in the spring, as heretofore. Last Sunday I could not fill my appointment.” Why did a prophetic voice ring through her heart, as she sat there, taking away her strength with each almost fierce repetition, “*He will never get better! he will never get better!*” It was like the bitterness of death to think that all the sweeter impulses of her life were to be slowly crushed out of being. She had dreamed so many happy dreams! She had so longed for a broader field, a parish of her own; she had seen herself so often surrounded by smiling faces, praising George, whose efforts were nobly appreciated, and who was fast winning for himself an enviable reputation.

And now all her sweet pictures of the future were to be turned, face to the wall, the canvas was to lie neglected, the brilliant colours were never more to light her eye. Could any blessing compensate her for these,—ay, though it came direct from the Father’s hand? Suddenly she heard her name whispered. Another moment and everything was forgotten save that George was there, beside her. What was there in his face that gave her hope? He had never been so brilliant, had never looked so beautiful. Inwardly she smiled at her own fears, and straightway forgot all her trouble. “Aunt Polly insisted upon my lying down a-while,” he said; “and you know Aunt Polly’s word is law in this house, so I slept, and feel better for it.”—“Are you well? you wrote, you know——” “Some nonsense about my cough, I suppose. I was low spirited then, for a wonder, but I am much better since I came to Winterswood. The doctor recommended change of air, and that is just the tonic I needed. Sometimes I’m inclined to class my

symptoms among the nervous affections, for they haven't troubled me since I started from home. Do you know I left them furnishing the parsonage."—"What, the nervous affections?" laughed Ruth, her spirits rising as she heard his firm voice, and saw him so bright and happy.

"No, the good sisters of Bradley. They realized a thousand dollars from various fairs and suppers, and they are showing great taste in their purchases."—"Is the parsonage prettily located?"—"As the picture. It is situated on the slope of a hill, and has a bay-window in the parlour, and such a lot of little conveniences everywhere. I told them I should not come back without you."

Ruth smiled and blushed. All her vague fears were gone. A little regretful wonder as to what papa would do without her, crossed her mind, but then papa had had plenty of time in which to prepare himself. Mr Eggleston came in from his lunch. He was delighted to see George, and led him to the window to have a good look at him. "Polly has been telling me you were sick, but I don't see anything serious," he said pleasantly. "I expect she wants a chance to dose you with some of her Scotch remedies."

"Oh, I'm all right!" said George; "I cough occasionally, that's all. Are you off?"

"Yes, a funeral to attend, take good care of Ruth while I am gone; and, Ruth, shall I bring the little girl home with me?"—"I—think—not," replied Ruth deliberately.

Santy had not cared to come, the minister said, on his return. He had left her quite comfortable before a blazing log-fire, and an old man had been hired to take care of the premises till such time as the business affairs were settled. The next morning Mr Eggleston scrutinized the face of his young friend more carefully. He had said he coughed occasionally; the minister had been kept awake nearly all night with that hard, hollow cough.

"Did you rest well?" he asked, as George sipped his coffee. "I coughed occasionally," he answered, and then, seeing Ruth's pained face, he changed the subject.

A happy week followed,—a week to be remembered through all the years of one chastened, blessed life. Those pleasant hours in the study, the chats that held so many blissful reminiscences of the past, so many beautiful hopes for the future; the sweet anxiety that never, never could become certainty, and then one direful day when the minister telegraphed to Bradley that Mr Winchester had been taken suddenly ill, and might be detained another week. Another week and yet another passed, and it soon became evident that George was never to return to Bradley.

"I said it," Aunt Polly repeated to the neighbours who came to ask. "I said the puir lad would never go back alive. I knowed how it was wi' his mither, who was took in paufect health, as it were,—one day in her gown and anither in her shroud. It ill becomes one to lay oot for the future as Miss Rooth hae done, the dear lassie! It's a wofu' sight to see her pale cheeks and wearisome een, and the Lord help when death comes atween. I'm feared it 'll go hard wi' the lassie, who was always a wee bit set au things. I'm feared it 'll break her heart, though hearts are tooough in the main, hearts are tooough in the main; I hae' ane mysel', an' though it's mortal crackit, it's never broken."—"But you don't mean that the young man is really so ill as that. I saw him at the station, and there was the promise of foreshore in his face," said the visitor.

"Promises are breetle things," said wise Miss Riggs, shaking her cap into order, speecially the promises of ane that's got consumption as an inhairatance. My dear woman, I dreemed o' a dish they git up in my ain countree, and sure as I dream of haggess, so sure I go to a funeral. Ye'll see if it's nowt true atween this an' May.

CHAPTER X.

GRACIE.

“Light of those whose dreary dwelling
 Borders on the shades of death,
 Come, and by Thy love revealing,
 Dissipate the clouds beneath.”

GEORGE was resigned and Ruth was silent. A dumb despair seemed to have taken possession of her heretofore hopeful nature. “I shall never be happy again!” she said, one day with hardly repressed tears. “Yes, you will, dear, in God’s own time,” George responded. “His strength is made perfect in human weakness, and the day may come when you will thank Him for the severest of your trials.”

“And can you really thank Him for this suffering, for this rending of ties that were to be so sacred, for this life but begun, for these opportunities only entered upon and then forbidden,—can you?”

“He helps me to say yes,” was the slow, solemn answer. Ruth hid her face in the pillow.

“For, Ruth,—lift up your head, child; try to be calm, for my sake; I have not lived in vain. The world has gained something of eternal truth, even through my poor efforts. I have only spoken a few words for Christ, but He has counted them all, and it is not lost time. I can see this better than you can, for as my strength grows less, my vision becomes clearer, and I look beyond the gates into eternity. I behold Christ as I never beheld Him before, the only sure foundation for weary, stumbling humanity. When will men see it? when will women see it?”

when will the little children draw closer to His great, sheltering love? Darling, I want you to love HIM, I want you to merge all the pure womanly affection you have felt for unworthy me, into the greater and more absorbing, utterly pure love of Christ in God. Don't think of Him as a myth, as a principle, as a vague essence, a something which you have been taught to feel near you, but as a real, living, personal presence, walking by your side, guiding and directing your steps, forming your impulses, shaping your very thoughts. Then you will know what life was given for."

"I can only think of one thing now," half sobbed Ruth, "it was given us to suffer in."

"Yes, but even suffering comes as an angel to God's children. At first the cloud of our earthliness covers it, but as it goes on with its mission, the cloud changes to a shining veil, and presently we discover beneath it a face of divine holiness and beauty. It came to me with my first pang at thought of leaving you, of laying down the sweetest duties of my life, but now it has enabled me to see that to die is gain. God has work for me still; I am not going to be idle while you are at your labour here, as I hope you will be for long years yet. I shall still be doing my Father's will."—"Oh, George, how can you wish me a long life!" moaned poor Ruth.

"Because, dear, I know you so well. You have the faculty of winning hearts to you; the hearts of little children, of friends more mature; your nature is large, capable and loving, your health seems perfect, and think what work you may do for Jesus! Live for HIM, Ruth, talk of Him everywhere; I charge you to make Him the sole guide of your life. I know you love Him, Ruth; think nothing too trifling to carry to Him. Can I make it plain to you how it is possible to live in heaven? If your conversation

is of heavenly things, if your thoughts travel thither from all your solitude, if in your heart you carry Christ, thus you will change into His image, thus you will show forth His glory. Now will my congregation please disperse?" he added, with a sweet smile, "and go seek air and sunshine in a pleasant walk?"

Ruth rose wearily, and slowly left the room. She could not yet see with his sight, which was spiritually opened; she could not yet feel that utter abnegation of self which recognizes God's mercy in all things. She only knew that she was in trouble, that her heart was sick with anguish, and that she looked forward to loneliness and weariness through all the coming years. That this was a selfish sorrow did not occur to her,—it was simply her sorrow; and she was miserable. She threw on her bonnet and shawl, and avoiding Aunt Polly, who had seemed determined to waylay her of late, she walked out into the sunny street. The road was bare and brown in spots; little pools of melted snow lay in the gutters, and here and there a tuft of last year's grass showed itself. Ruth took an unfrequented street that was only used by the quarrymen as they went to and fro. She knew that in the more populous thoroughfares she should meet acquaintances who might thoughtlessly wound her by their smiles, and their happy faces. It was a muddy street, generally, but now the ground was crusted and frozen, and as it was only change of air she needed, not sights and sounds, she cared little what way she went. Far down the distance as she walked on, thinking her own sad thoughts, she saw another veiled figure, slighter and shorter than herself, coming towards her from an opposite direction. At first she felt like turning back, for she wanted the place solitary for herself, but presently she thought, "It is nobody I know or care for," and so kept on. It was a lovely day. The sun shone warmly,

tempering the winter atmosphere, and the sky was as blue as the pure heavens. Nothing was in harmony with Ruth's mood, however; she could not reconcile it with her loving kindness that her betrothed should be taken from her and the world at the very threshold of his useful and beautiful life; and it made her almost unhappy to see him so resigned and patient. Suddenly she was startled out of her reverie by the sound of a soft voice, "Why, Miss Eggleston!"

She looked up. The little creature before her, with eyes suddenly shining, and bright cheeks, was no other than the wife of Silent Tom. "I am so glad to see you!" she said, extending her hand; "I haven't dared to call."

Ruth shook hands silently.

"I think I'll turn and walk with you," Ruth said unconsciously, glad to escape the dreary monotony of her own thoughts; "you must have gone a long distance."

"Out to the quarries," replied Mrs Warwick. "Tom forgot his lunch, for a wonder,"—she stopped there, and sighed,—"and so I wanted a walk and carried it to him. He scolded me a little, but I think he was glad."

"Have you seen papa, lately?" asked Ruth.

"Only on Sabbaths. I think Tom hates to have me go to church worse than ever, since—since I have told him."

"Then you told him—*all*?" asked Ruth. She shook her head. "Not quite all. I was frightened out of it like the coward I am. I told him of my late experience, and you can't think how he took it. I couldn't possibly describe it; his words were few,—but his looks, oh? his looks were dreadful. Do you know I was sorry I spoke! I wished then I had let some one else speak for me. After a time he tried to treat it as a hallucination, laughed at me, reasoned with me, and then, finding that I was really in earnest, his face became as

hard as a rock. And that is the way it has seemed to me ever since. Then he can say such cutting things! poor Tom! he is so terribly disappointed, for I know he thought I would give in and go his ways at the last."

Her eyes were full of tears. "I am rather a miserable consoler, just now," said Ruth, "but I think you ought to be glad you have told him so much."—"I *am* glad at times, but I think so highly of Tom, that I can't bear to see him unhappy and know that I am the cause."—"But you can't retreat now, you know," said Ruth, becoming interested.

"Oh, no; I have no wish even to seem to do so, and as every soul has its cross to carry, this must be mine. But Tom is so good, in all but that, so just, that it seems monstrous for us to walk in divided paths. Do you know he will not even have a volume of the Holy Scriptures in the house. I have a little Bible which my mother gave me, but he never sees me reading it. I have plenty of time, but it is not so pleasant to feel that I must be secret, even with that, and it is my only solace, almost my only comfort. Even to-day, I feel as if I must confide in some one. I hope it is not treason to him," she paused for a moment; "well, when I carried him his lunch he said that doubtless I supposed that one of my religious duties. There's not much in the words, but oh, the way he said them! I felt as if I should fall. Miss Ruth, I think it's utterly impossible for poor mortals to be happy in this world; even when one has found the Saviour, dark hours and dark days will come."—"The servant is not greater than his Lord," said Ruth gently, not thinking how nearly the words applied to her own state. "If Christ, perfect in goodness and knowledge, suffered, why should we escape?"—"Truly, there! your kind words have made me feel so much better! Do you know there is something in your very face that invites confidence, and wins respect and love? I can't help saying that."

Ruth's thoughts travelled back to the sick room. Were not those almost exactly the very words George had said, not an hour before? "You are very good to say so," Ruth responded in a low, changed voice. "I wish circumstances were such that we could often meet each other, but—" Ruth could say no more, only swallow her tears.

"And you, so good and kind, you have your trials! I believe after this I shall be more patient and forbearing. God certainly sent you in my way when everything looked so dark and miserable!"

"Do you ever get lonesome?" asked Ruth, after a little struggle to conquer herself.

"When I am not busy, yes,—and here is another cross; you may smile, but it is a heavy one. I am passionately fond of music; I dream of it as the thirsty dream of cool water, but as I have kept it a secret from Tom, I never speak of it, of course. He wonders, when I listen with hushed breath almost, to those miserable organs that occasionally make their appearance in the village. I don't believe he likes music, and it pains me to think so; if he only did, I am sure I should betray myself, and perhaps it would be best so. Once or twice he has made disparaging remarks that really hurt me. We were passing the windows of Judge Birdsall one night, and some one was playing one of Verdi's sweet compositions, when he said, 'Let's get out of the way of that tooting,' and actually hurried me along. Only think! and my heart was so sick for music! 'Then you wouldn't want me to play,' I said. 'You! the wife of a poor labouring man,' he said; 'don't get fine notions in your head, Gracie; I married you because, sweet and delicate as you are, you owe it all to nature, and not to accomplishments.' Think how I must have felt, Miss Ruth, and how I must still feel, when he holds me up as an argument in favour of the cultivating graces of nature? If it wasn't

for the books," she added in a lower voice, "I don't know what I should do sometimes. But I don't even dare to leave a mark in them. Doesn't it seem to you that I am living a daily lie? How can I prosper and grow spiritually, and yet I can't get up the strength to say what I should."

"Do you ever mean to?" asked Ruth.

"Oh, yes, of course I must in time, perhaps when he has recovered from the consternation into which my first confession seems to have thrown him. Don't think I complain of him, not for one moment; he is my ideal of what a true man should be in almost everything but his singular prejudice against religion. And who knows but the dear Lord may make me an instrument of his conversion? The believing wife is sanctified to the unbelieving husband. My precious little Bible tells me that."

"You will come and see me sometimes," said Ruth as they parted; "perhaps,"—she hesitated,—"one of these days I may open my piano for you."

Gracie Warwick knew what she meant, and the two friends parted silently—clasping hands again.

CHAPTER XI.

SANTY'S RIDE.

“Hour after hour,
Day after day,
Some gentle flower,
Or leaf, gives way,

Within the bower
Of human hearts,
Tear after tear
In anguish starts.”

Now was the time to see the real beauties of Winterswood. Some one has said that “nobody knows what the colour of a green field can be till he has seen it among the magic smiles and tears of an Irish summer shower in County Down in old Ireland.” It may be so, and yet I should not fear to challenge all lovers of the beauties of nature to show brighter fields, or a lovelier or more cloudless sky than shone down upon old Stoneyhedge that soft, sweet May morning. To be sure, the soil was rocky, but everywhere the grey stony faces that peeped out were tenderly framed in the greenest of moss, and in summer only added to the peculiar charm of the landscape. The fields were smiling in their new beauty, the blue and winding river sparkled in the vivid sunlight, wandering in and out through miles of lovely verdure, and widening as it neared the town. In the distance a mill picturesquely situated between grey-green woods, a strip of hill landscape, diversified by great blotches of red marl and black iron-stone ledges of sandy-coloured rock, made the picture a pleasant one, even to Santy’s critical eyes, as she stood in the old broken porch on the west side of the house.

Santy had cultivated the graces somewhat, since the day on which she found herself her own mistress. She

knew now that she had a little money, that she had arrived at the dignity of possessing a guardian, and that several people were interested in her welfare. She supposed that the house and land also belonged to her, that as she stood there, delighting in the warmth of the sun, pleasing herself with the prospect, she was "monarch of all she surveyed, and her right there was none to dispute."

It had not been possible for Mr Eggleston to take the child to the parsonage, as Ruth had wished, at first, while the young minister lay so ill, and Santy resolutely declined to leave Stoneyhedge for any home but his, so they had hired an old man to take care of the garden, while his wife superintended the household affairs within doors.

She was a kind, good woman, and curtailed none of poor Mit's privileges while she watched the larder, lest things should run to waste, and taught neglected Santy to sew and knit, and to read in words of two syllables.

Santy, childish and ignorant as she was, had not passed the ordeal of sudden prosperity unscathed. She had become tired of ordering meals, for the passion of hunger had died out, and her natural appetite was very much like that of other girls of her age. For a time she had craved delicacies, and so surfeited herself that sickness had followed. This stern lesson of nature did her some good, but the habit of command was growing imperceptibly upon her, causing the good old woman who had charge of her much uneasiness. Santy wore neat little dresses; new, with ruffled aprons, and she was exceedingly particular not to spot or soil them. When she wanted a run in the woods, she put on a dress 'specially adapted to the purpose, and pursued her old amusements with more than the old vivacity, for she was healthier now, and consequently her animal spirits were greater. She had heard that she was her uncle's heiress, and was satisfied to know

that she might go to school in summer, and to church or wherever else she wished whenever she signified a wish so to do. The infirmity of human nature expressed itself now and then in her putting on airs, and imagining Mit and old Mrs Saunders her inferiors; in being dissatisfied with her black bonnet, because she had seen white ones in church, and in an extravagant desire for six pairs of shoes at a time. During the sad trouble at the house of the minister, Santy had not even seen Miss Ruth. At the very last, when day after day the doctor gave no hope that the sick man could live till the sun set and then till it rose again, Ruth placed her Sunday class in the charge of a friend, and remained at home. It happened that on the day when the new and inexperienced teacher took the class, Santy attended for the first time, but not meeting Miss Ruth, put on an indifferent face and was somewhat sullen at the close. "I don't like that girl at all!" thought the new teacher.

"I don't like Sunday school!" said Santy to herself, yawning, "and I don't believe I'll come again. It's fine to go to church, and have nothing to do, and look at the nice clothes, and not bother over your letters, and have the other girls laugh at you." Santy walked back and forth on the porch, the morning on which this chapter opens. She had been washing in the earlier hours down in the river,—not the rags of poor old Bedwrench, but the unsoiled garments of a good, substantial wooden doll that Miss Ruth had sent her. She had paddled with bare feet in the shallow places; her little bantam-hen clucking as it ran along the mossy bank. At such times she called herself wild Santy, and tried to make believe that her uncle was still alive, and she longing for another slice of the old, hard loaf, stale on the first day for the sake of economy, but it was of no use. She knew that bread and

honey, both fresh, awaited her whenever she asked for it. Some little furniture had been added to the household; new chairs, a table or two, and bedding enough for comfort. The kitchen upon which Santy opened the door, looked different from the same room during the rule of Simon Grue. The windows were mended, and the sun came in unhindered by dust and cobwebs. The tins and new crockery shone along the dresser-shelves. A pair of cumbrous but respectable iron-dogs stood grimly in front of the blazing logs, which of themselves gave show of cheer and comfort and beauty to the otherwise bare room.

Mit had changed but little, since the miser's death. That came to her by inheritance which wiser people strive to attain, content. But then her ambition might be expressed by an O, and her desires and capacities were of the most limited character. Forty years of slavish submission and sleepy inanity had choked up all the fountains of her nature, and it seemed simply impossible for her either to reason or reflect.

Santy was an object of untiring admiration to her. "However she had grown into such a lady," she said, "she could not understand." She would do anything the child bade her; which was not good for Santy, as there was plenty of the tyrant in her unschooled nature. The girl sauntered to the corner where her work-basket stood, took up her knitting, and threw it down again.

"I don't want to work this beautiful morning," she said, looking about uneasily. "I want to go somewhere."

"Go walk by the river," said Mit. "I've been by the river; I've been all over here; I want to go down to the village,—and there's Doctor Willis!" she added, "I'll ask him." Another minute she was on the steps of the front door, waving her hand. The doctor, a young man, stopped at sight of her, supposing somebody was sick. "Well,

what's the matter?" he asked, holding his reins gracefully. —"Nothing's the matter, only once you promised you'd take me to ride with you; will you?" The doctor smiled, then knit his brows, then took out his watch. "All ready?" he asked. Santy looked herself over; she felt, by his tone, that he had no time to spare. "I'd like to put on my best dress and go stylish," she said. "I hate black," said the doctor, "on with your hat, or sun-bonnet, or whatever is handy; I'm in something of a hurry this morning."

Santy scampered back into the kitchen. "I tell you what," was her parting sentence to Mit. "*I can do just whatever I please. Tell Mrs Saunders I'm gone,*" and in another moment she sat at the doctor's side, her eyes sparkling at this unexpected good fortune. "You'll have to sit in the chaise while I visit my patients," he said.

"And hold the horse?" queried Santy. "Oh, no; Tim never needs holding. You couldn't get him to budge an inch after I leave the chaise till I come back."—"Are you going to stop at many places?"—"Some five or six; one is down at the quarries; did you ever see the quarries?"

"Never," said Santy. "I'll leave you there a few moments, while I go over to the mill. Old Jacobs has had a stroke."—"Was that what ailed my uncle?" asked Santy. "Yes, I suppose so." Santy was silent for a moment, then queried, "What struck him?"—"Sickness, death," was the reply. "It's very nice here, I shouldn't like to die," said Santy, gravely. She had utterly forgotten that once in the weary monotony of her starved life she had longed to die. "We are none of us very anxious to shuffle off this mortal coil, I suppose," said the doctor.

"What?" asked Santy, broadly. "I forgot you had never read Shakespeare," laughed the doctor; "that means, my dear, that people are generally in love with life; but I must leave you here; sit quite still for awhile; Tim won't

move." Tim did not move. Santy busied herself in watching the old gardener raking over last year's flower-beds in front of the handsome house of Judge Birdsall. Santy enjoyed the breadth and beauty of the scene; took in all the delicacy of detail that distinguished the handsome building, its cornices, the shadows that lengthened under its white eaves, the tall, bright French windows, the handsome porticos, the taste and finish of the garden-walks. Unconsciously the girl began comparing it with Stoneyhedge, and the latter seemed to her more than ever hideous.

"If Stoneyhedge does belong to me," she said softly to herself, "I'll tear it down and build it over some day, and it shall look like that."

Just then a woman came to the window on the second storey, young and beautiful, but even Santy could not mistake the hopeless, helpless sorrow that shadowed her face, that looked out of large, haggard eyes. Then the folded hands were pressed upon the forehead, and the face fell within them, while the whole form trembled with unuttered sobs. The doctor appeared again at the door, accompanied by a servant, who held her apron to her eyes. To her he spoke a few words, and came leisurely towards the carriage. "What's the matter there?" asked Santy. "A beautiful child is sick, and I can't save him," he said gravely. "Was that it's mother who came to the window?"—"Yes; poor little fellow!" he added, after a pause, "it's very hard!"—"It's a nice place," said Santy, evidently reflecting deeply. "Yes," the doctor nodded. "I shouldn't want to die if I lived there; why can't everybody live? what does people die for any way?"

"The minister will tell you that death came into the world because of sin," said the doctor, "and the longer I live the more I see the thing in that light," he muttered to himself. "Sin, sin?" murmured Santy, vaguely.

"Yes, wickedness of all kinds, disobedience to God, hypocrisy, murder, lust, and a general devilishness. If any man on earth sees the punishment of sin in all its varied forms it is he who follows my profession. Why, the world is rotten;—yes, to the core." Santy, not understanding the assertion, and thinking that something had happened to make the doctor angry, held her tongue. But she pondered on his words. "If ever I see the minister again, or Miss Ruth, I'll ask them all about it," she said to herself. The chaise stopped for a few moments before several common-place tenements, and then at the gate of the minister's parsonage. "Mr Eggleston lives here," said the doctor. "Oh, does he?" Santy looked as if she would jump from the carriage.

"I may have to wait longer here than I have before; do you think you can be patient?"—"Oh, yes, I'll try," said Santy, looking at the windows; "but if I only could see him, or Miss Ruth."—"It isn't likely you'll see either," was the reply, delivered with a very grave face. "They're in deep trouble, both of them," and he went slowly into the house. Santy drew to the side of the chaise nearest the house. What a sweet place it was, with its garden patches, where many a golden crocus peeped out,—with its neat porch over which thick vines of honeysuckle clambered; its bay window, through which the sun streamed upon a lovely in-doors garden of wonderful beauty, bright with all the hues of the rainbow. "It's prettier than that great, splendid house even," said Santy, with a little sigh of gratification. "I wonder if I shall ever go in there and see Miss Ruth?" No sooner had she spoken than a pale, woe-worn face appeared for a brief second at the window just above. Santy caught her breath, sprang up in the carriage and cried out, but the white, grief-stricken face had not seen her; the eyes had seemed to look a very great way off.

Santy fell back in her seat and burst into tears, while Tim, surprised at this unusual commotion in the old chaise while his master was away, tried to turn his head round to find out what was the matter. "Heck, honey!" said a strange voice, and Santy lifted her wet eyes to see a prodigiously ruffled cap bobbing before her, and a long, gaunt, Scotch face peering at her curiously with its two steel-grey eyes. "Hae the trouble of the hoose affected your bit mind, lassie?" asked the new comer, as she stood there with her hand resting on the open gate. "Indeed, it's convairted into a vale o' sorrow for the time. I'm sent out by the meenester himsel' to ca' you in and gie' ye some refrashment." She extended the other hand, and Santy dreamily descended to the wooden plank, and walked after Miss Riggs into the pleasant porch, through the hall, and finally sat down in the clean, shining kitchen.

"Noo, what'll ye have? there's baith brown bread an' wheat. The meenester wad naver eat anything but the brown, but I'm inclined for baith, sin' vareeity's the spice o' life." Santy easily persuaded herself that she was hungry, and accepted the sweet brown bread and the glass of milk that seemed to her taste like nectar.

"So ye're the little leddy left at the place called Stoney-hedge. How do ye git along all by yersel' in that hard place? I happened to know that awfu' man, yer uncle,—ye'll not mind my speakin' plain, since that's ane o' my edioseencracies. It was never but a bit I heered from the meenester, for he has a wholesome dread of talking about his neebers. I hope ye're joost enjoyin' your freedom." Santy faintly hoped she was.

"Ye'll no be seein' Miss Rooth," continued the house-keeper, catching up her knitting from the little stand where it had been resting, "because we're in the deep waters of affleection. Sin' last night at six I've no' closed

my eyes, watchin' with that holy young man. It does seem as if the Lord speecially sent his speerit to rest in that dyin' chamber."—"Is somebody else dying?" asked Santy, letting her spoon fall; "it seems to me everybody's dying."—"Heck, lassie, it's an evil warld since sin and death came upon it. There's Miss Rooth's poor young meenester, leavin' us a' as quiet an' peacefu' as a lamb, an' that after the exqueesite sufferin' he has passed through. It's enough to mak' everybody greel to witness it; and she, puir soul, is joost that worn oot, I'm afraid she'll give oop when he's gane, an' joost fa' down on her own sick-bed. The Lord keep her; He's leadin' her through the deep waters, the puir lassie."

"Does the Lord do it?" asked Santy, "Him that's so kind?"

"Does the Lord do it! hear the lassie! of all eegnorance! It's little ye know o' yer Bible, or the catecheesm, if ye don't know that the Lord has a han' in a' things."

"But I shouldn't think he would take away Miss Ruth's minister; what has she done to vex him?"

"Hoot, lassie! you're as eegnorant o' these things as the puir heathen theirsel's. We've all vexit Him sairly, an' the only wonner is that He lets any of His puir creatures live."

"I don't think He's very kind, then," said Santy with a flushed face.

"An ye'll set yersel' up judgin' HIM?" cried Miss Polly, letting her knitting fall, and "speering" at Santy through her gold-bowed spectacles, "weel, if I ever a' my life saw such presumption. Child, ye'll hae to be convairted all through. If I ain't beat now! a bit lassie like that! ye'll be a power for a sight o' evil if ye're not properly instroucted. It clean

beats me, but I'll no' talk religion to ye in the state ye're in now, it's but natural after *his* trainin'. Would ye like to see the libery a bit afore ye go? It's where the meenester studies his sermons."

"Yes, I should," said Santy, brushing the crumbs from her dress. Miss Riggs led the way there.

"It's a'most impossible to keep the doost down," she said, blowing a speck from the green cloth on the study-table.

"Oh, that's *him*!" exclaimed Santy, clasping her hands and lifting them in the fervency of her admiration.

"Yes, that's the meenester, taken in the bloom o' his youth," responded the housekeeper, wondering at Santy's lighted face.

"Oh, isn't he, *isn't* he beautiful!" Santy continued, her eyes devouring the painted likeness of the first man from whose lips she had ever heard a word of affection.

"I'd believe *anything* he told me!" she murmured to herself.

"Ye'll be mair circumspect in your language when ye're grown!" muttered Mistress Riggs. "If ye can spare the time to look," she added in a colder and louder voice, "ye'll see his leddy."

Santy turned to the saint-like face over the fire-place.

"That's not Miss Ruth!" she said.

"No, it's the meenester's leddy, I tell you, Miss Ruth's own mither; and a more blessed woman never lived."

"And she's dead, I suppose?"

"She's dead and doost," was the brief reply.

Santy began to feel a sort of personal hatred towards this strange, invisible presence that seemed to haunt her this morning, and turned abruptly away from the picture. Mistress Riggs was displeased.

"I s'pose ye've got no eyes but for the meenester," she said; "he's by no means sae weel-favoured."

"I want to look at everything," said Santy, fervently, "so I can think it out when I get home. I do get so lonesome up there, I like to have pleasant things to remember. How nice it is here with the roses, and the birds, and the pretty carpets, and the books! oh, how beautiful it is!"

Her look of childish, genuine admiration softened the old Scotch woman. "I dare say it's a' new to ye," she said, "an' the warld's a' new to ye wi' its trials and temptations; may ye pass through them a' without the smell o' fire on your gairments,—that's the best wush I can wush ye," she said softly.

"If it wasn't for that miserable dying," thought Santy.

No divine impulses had yet been kindled in her nature, and consequently there was not spiritual vision. She needed to be in daily communication with souls to whom religion was a verity, in order to be brought into a condition to receive any convictions of immortal truth.

It was impossible to decide what influences might most usefully be exercised upon a character at once so impressionable and so receptive

Whoever comes in contact with a soul wherein God lives and reigns, whether he be atheist, infidel, or a mere worldling and sensualist, cannot fail to feel the power and glory of the religion of Jesus Christ.

CHAPTER XII.

SAVED AT THE QUARRIES.

“Beyond the flight of time,
 Beyond the reign of death,
 There surely is some blessed clime
 Where life is not a breath,
 Nor life's affection's transient fire,
 Where sparks fly upward and expire.”

STEPS were heard on the stairs. “It's the doctor,” said the house-keeper, “and the look o' his face is a meesery. You'll gang out to the chaise as quick as ye weel; I'm sair afear'd the worst is come.” Santy went to the study-door, and shrank back at sight of the doctor's face.

“Miss Riggs, you had better go upstairs,” he said gravely. “It's all over.” Santy said nothing, even when the doctor had helped her into the chaise. She was aware that she felt very unhappy and restless, but wondered why, when it was none of her trouble, she should be so distressed by it. The sky was just as blue, the sun smiled as brightly, the roads and the fields shone each with their own peculiar beauty, the trees nodded in the soft, sweet wind; little children home from school made bits of bright colour along the village-street, now crimson, now blue, and laughed and sang as merrily as the birds, but Santy sat quiet and almost gloomy. It was not till they were nearing the quarry that she ventured to speak.

“Did Miss Ruth feel very bad?” The doctor trailed the long lash of his whip along the right flank of Tim, where a fly had lodged, and he shut his teeth together as he said, “So bad that I expect to have her on my books

for a month, poor girl! She is utterly worn out. I don't wonder they say the ways of Providence are mysterious; I think they are,—very."

Santy thought and thought. "Does Providence mean death?" she asked. "It seems to, just now," was his answer. Santy needed a comforter. She needed, at that moment, when her mind was freshly awakened to the subject, to be shown the pleasant side of death, the joyous, the victorious, the glowing aspect in which God and angels see it. But the doctor was occupied with his own impressions; he was a man of science, and though he did not ignore religion, it was but little more to him than a name.

"Oh, how lonely poor Miss Ruth must feel!" sighed Santy, and the tears began to run down her cheeks. "If she could only comfort her in some simple way;" her heart ached for her sorrow.

"So much for consumptive ancestors," muttered the doctor. "Santy, don't stoop that way; throw your shoulders back; never sit falling forward, unless you want to die early. By the way, is your father living?"

"No, sir." Santy was looking across the fields.

"What did he die of?"—"I don't know, sir."

"Consumption, I'll be bound! I must look after this child," he muttered. Then in a louder voice, "Is your mother living?"—"I don't know, sir," and the answer ended in a sob. "Don't know; did that old—never mind, I dare say it's as well. Why, Santy, child, you're crying."—"Yes," and Santy dashed away the tears with one hand. "I think of 'em sometimes; I just wish I could see 'em."

"Who?"—"My mother, and my dear little sister; now I ain't got nobody," and the sobs burst forth again, "and everything is so miserable," she added with great gulps.

"Well, well," thought the doctor, "here's a pretty kettle of fish. We thought she was stolid, at old Grue's funeral,

and it turns out that she's got a heart, after all. One would think she had forgotten. The best way is to let her have her cry out, however." Presently Santy's sobs grew fainter. They had been passing great ledges of purplish rocks, and the ground under their feet was jagged with flint and granite. "Here are the quarries," said the doctor, quietly. Santy looked about her, drying her eyes, and a little ashamed that she had been betrayed into crying. Not far from where they had stopped for a moment, shone the blue river at its widest, and two or three small vessels showed their rigging through the yawning apertures of great caves, between thickly-foliated trees, and the rude, shallow shed constructed for the workmen.

The quarries, mighty reaches of unhewn stone, layer upon layer, looked like some ancient amphitheatre, formed by strange convulsions of nature, into seats and circles, and arches. A soft, glittering red colour pervaded the luminous masses; shadows black and abrupt told where the great hollows, like caves, underlaid the stone.

The tone and spirit of the scene accorded with Santy's mood. She did not understand it, she understood nothing to-day; all things had seemed shut out beyond her comprehension, or mysterious, or unlovely. The great masses of colour pleased her untrained eye, the brilliant heavens, the deeper tinting of the river, the gleam of white sails, the high line of the horizon, broken here and there by warmly-coloured hill-tops, the long teams to which powerful oxen were harnessed; the men running, standing, working under roofs, which permitted a sight of the busy life beyond; the careless laughter, the snatches of song, the red and blue shirts of the brawny-chested labourers, everything was forgotten as she gazed.

"Well, Santy," said Dr Willis, "I see you are thinking very hard; is it all worth seeing?" Santy drew a long

breath. "Yes, indeed ; I didn't dream it was anything like that," said the girl, looking from one point to another. "What do they do with all the stones they take out ?"

"Fashion them into palaces, into door frames, into winding staircases, into great stores, where iron is the only other thing employed. Now what shall I do with you ? Over opposite you see that little frame house ? A poor widow lives there, and I am trying to raise up her only son who has been sick from an accident for months ; but then you have heard so much of sickness and——"

"Is he going to die ?" asked Santy anxiously. "No, he is going to get well ; it is only a question of time."

"Then I'll stop there. I suppose I can walk out, can't I ?"

"Yes, if you'll be careful and not get into danger." He stopped at the house and helped Santy down. The widow came to the door, her face brightened at sight of the doctor.

"Jake has had such a night !" she said, beaming, "good sound sleep from beginning to end."—"That's news worth hearing," the doctor responded. "I brought this little girl along to see the quarries."—"Bless her, and they're a sight worth seeing any day, I take it. Bring her right in to my little place ; it's humble, Miss, but it's clean."

The woman dusted a chair as laboriously as if there was occasion, and Santy sat down, forcibly reminded of her first experience of Stoneyhedge, she could hardly tell why, except that there was a dreary, poverty-stricken expression in the room. "Doing better than I expected," said the doctor, entering the kitchen again. "Jake will be up and round in a few weeks, Mrs Davis."

"Oh, sir, I humbly thank God for it !" said the widow. "I think it's changed him for the better, sir. Mr Eggleston, dear man that he is, has made it in his way to visit Jake every other day, and oh ! sir, he do talk heavenly. It's like having a bit of church inside my poor doors. I'm

so thankful!"—"Now, I'm off to the mill; Santy, you will stay here till I return, or be somewhere in the vicinity, won't you? Don't keep me waiting."

Santy promised, and as soon as the chaise was gone, left the woman at her work, and strolled over towards the quarry. What wonders seemed stored up in these mountainous masses. Whole cities, with their warehouses, their church-steeples, and their palace-homes, shut up in these magnificent strata. Santy peered under the excavations. "What made them?" she wondered.

Two men in their shirt-sleeves stood over a huge block of sparkling brown stone. One of them was talking volubly, the other listened, putting in a word occasionally.

Santy went forward more cautiously, till presently she found herself quite near the two quarry-men. Unconsciously she looked up at the taller one, whose magnificent figure, towering head, and massive throat, were splendidly outlined against the ruddy rocks in the background.

"Tom, I say, Tom!" said the one who had carried on the conversation, as he caught sight of Santy, "you know old Grue?" Tom started,—a quick spasm passed over his face as if a twinge of pain had seized him. "Yes," he said in a short, sharp tone.—"There's his niece,—the girl that inherits all the old man's dimes."—"What?"

Santy felt the shock of the sound, as the word shot fiercely from his lips, and looked over at him. He was gazing at her with an expression that made the child recoil; it was a look almost of hate,—unreasoning, repellent. "So that is old Simon Grue's niece?" he said, measuring off each word.—"Yes; and a fine property she inherits. Do you know there's possibly a mine on that farm, and where the land joins the old grave-yard, the finest kind of brown stone, much better than this, capable of taking a harder finish. I should rate the farm alone,

not taking into consideration the house, which is old-fashioned rubbish, at from fifty to seventy-five thousand dollars, for it is lined all through with free-stone."

At that moment a man came forward,—one of the under quarry-men,—lifting his shabby cap as he neared the two in consultation. "If you please, boss," he said to Silent Tom—for it was he whose appearance had impressed Santy—"Dick Carthy want to spake to yees."

Tom gave one more glance at Santy, who stood now swinging her straw hat by its long ribbon, and went, by one of the many rocky paths that intersected each other, springing from jutting block to block, down to a lower plane. It seemed that Carthy wished to consult him about a blast which was to come off in the course of fifteen or twenty minutes, and the conference was a short one. Meantime Santy, who at Tom's strange glance had walked away from him, turned again, when he disappeared from sight and moved quickly from one plane to another, picking up bits of stone that glittered like diamonds, so cunningly rounded and sharpened they were.

"If I get up there," she said, nodding to a projecting peak, that stood out from the masses about it, "I can see the doctor's carriage a long way off, and so be on the road the minute he comes along here." She found some tiny cup-moss, exactly the colour of the stone, and sat down to amuse herself with arranging it, just as Silent Tom walked away from his consultation with Carthy, and turned, moved backwards, step by step, still keeping the man and his movements in view, still with that hard, curious, defiant expression, until the signal was given, and the train was ready. Then looking up for a moment, he saw the girl, Santy, sitting in the very teeth of danger as she complacently hummed, and placed her mosses, and looked between-whiles road-ward. It is said that hun-

dreds of years have been concentrated into a dream of five or ten minute's duration. From the deck of a vessel to the plunge under the whelming waves, men have been known to see the whole panorama of their lives pass before them, with a terrible Dantean vividness. A sudden sickening revulsion of feeling went like a shock through Tom's mind; blue sky, green fields, the intense colours of the rocks, the unconscious girl, with her ribbons blown gently by the wind, all blended together, and for one second the strong man reeled. Little as she could comprehend it, that child seemed at that moment the man's worst enemy. The memory of old wrongs, long ago, burned into his brain, surged over his soul, and made him set his teeth fiercely. There were ten minutes between her and death,—ten minutes between his now comparative innocence and a monstrous crime. Why did he hesitate? He had tried not to believe in God, or a future, in a heaven or a hell. He had tried to believe in his own god-hood as being sufficient unto himself.

And Santy, sitting there so composedly, overlooked by everybody but silent Tom, had it been possible for her to feel the peril of her position, might have thought that she had been haunted all day by death, and now she was in his power, almost in his hands. She little knew that her possession of the miser's acres was an infringement upon the rights of the man who stood so intently watching her. In the few seconds during which Tom was coaxing murder into his thoughts, she was as unconsciously happy as she had ever been in her life. When, therefore, arrested by a sharp exclamation, she looked up, and saw that terrible man coming towards her, his eyes on fire, his chest labouring, his face,—to her startled comprehension,—vindictive as hate, she sprang from her seat with a shriek, threw up her arms, and turned to run further up, into sure and

swift destruction. "Stop, girl!" cried Silent Tom, with a voice that brought the men in groups from all directions, "stand still till I come up, or you'll be blown all to pieces."

Santy would not have stopped, but the threat and the voice paralyzed all further exertion. She paused with another cry, and stood shaking in an agony of terror, till suddenly she felt herself snatched up, held with a convulsive grasp, shaken with the tremendous bounds the man made from point to point to clear the danger,—and then, there was a sound like a thousand thunder-claps, a roar and clatter as of a babel full of voices!—dust, a choking atmosphere, a fall, and she lay nearly dead with terror in the grasp of the man who had perilled his life to save her. In less time than I can take to tell it, a crowd of rough, coatless men surrounded them. Santy was lifted, and set upon her feet, but she could not stand, could scarcely open her eyes or move her white face. Silent Tom seemed also stunned, and the blood was oozing from a wound in his head caused by the fall. "Is he hurt? is he dead?" ran from lip to lip. "Tom, old fellow, do you know me?"

"Here's the doctor," shouted another voice, and as soon as he could leave his chaise, the young physician was in their midst. He looked hurriedly round, saw Santy sitting there helpless, and made a mental note that he would never take a partner on his rounds again.

"Only stunned!" he said, as he examined Tom. "Noble fellow! what muscles! Well, Miss Santy, after promising to keep out of danger, you walk right into it with your eyes open, eh? I shall take care how I bring you to the works, after this."

Santy hung her head. "I thought he was,—was going to hurt me," she half sobbed; "he looked so dreadful."

Silent Tom opened his eyes, then glanced about him. "Where's the girl?" were the first words he spoke.

"Safe!" a dozen voices answered.

He laughed curiously. "Help me up, fellows. I'm not hurt anywhere, am I? Got out of the range, but the blast was powerful. So! she would have been blown to atoms. See there!"

They looked at the spot where Santy had been sitting arranging her mosses. It was split into fragments, and huge splinters were scattered in all directions for a wide space about it.

The doctor stanchd the blood which came from a slight incision in the scalp, and plastered the wound. After that he spoke aside to Santy, who went up to where Tom was standing, the lion of the hour.

"I thank you, sir!" she said, modestly, trembling from head to foot, "for saving my life. I didn't know there was any danger."

Her lip quivered, her eyes were full of tears that dropped and rolled over her cheeks as she ceased speaking. Tom looked down at her, then lifted her chin with his broad forefinger.

"I'm very glad I did it, my little girl," he said in his softest tones; "you will never know how glad," and then he pressed his lips together and shook his head as he turned away.

Santy, sighing frequently, but quite silent, followed the doctor to the road. There she stopped a moment, and looked back. The atmosphere was still thick at a certain point with the smoke of gunpowder; the smell of it made her faint.

Mrs Davis came running towards them. She had just heard that there had almost been an accident.

"You see, deary, they mostly never have children about

here, and this wasn't a reg'lar blast, but somethin' sorter out o' way. I heered all about it; 'twas Silent Tom saved ye; he's the idol of the men hereabouts, and prettily enough he speaks down to the hall, though I can't say much for the doctrines."

Seated in the chaise, Santy was willing enough to turn her back upon Mrs Davis and her poor cottage, upon the great, dusty, rocky area, and the strange, bustling life within it; willing enough to sit there, passively, neither asking nor answering questions, and for the first time in her life really and vitally "thinking out." The whole matter appeared like a dreadful dream to her; and when, in all her life, had a day so eventful come to her experience, so long, so crowded with incidents? Was it scarcely yet seven hours since she had stood on the porch, looking out with a silent gladness on the quiet sky? Then no troubles had assailed her. Her doll, her appetite, her dress, had bounded the horizon of her mental vision. Now all was changed; she had faced danger, and almost seen death. And there was dear Ruth weeping, and sorrowful,—sitting perhaps alone with her dead.

CHAPTER XIII.

SILENT TOM AT HOME.

"There is no God, the fool saith in his heart,
 Yet shapes a Godhead from his intellect.
 Is mind than heart less human—that we part
 Thought from affection, and from mind erect
 A Deity merely intellectual?
 I ask not what is God? but what
 Are my relations with Him? This alone
 Concerns me now."

THE little house in the row,—the only house with a porch,—was always kept fresh and neat. It was not so with the majority of the tenements, around which slatternly women stood and dirty children thronged.

Tom felt the contrast as he passed the open windows, from whence harsh voices issued, or the screams of unruly little ones, as he entered the exquisitely clean parlour, so sweet with the fragrance of heliotrope, and met his little wife, fair and pure as a lily, and neat as the busy hands could make her. "Gracie, you're so different from all the rest of the people here!" he exclaimed, as he followed her into the dining-room. "See the superiority of nature to art, or to fashion,—or to what they call education! Did you know that Jesse Reeves had hired a piano for his wife—an old, tinkling thing?"

Gracie's cheeks were red as she answered, she thought she had "heard music at the other end of the row."

"Yes, and there's his wife; took her from boarding-school, poor fellow, and she sits like a slattern, with a yellow ribbon on her neck, and her hair as high as a steeple. How came you by your grace and delicacy, little woman,—you, an orphan?"

The roses had gone now, and Gracie was very pale, yet the luminous spirituality of her face quite compensated for any lack of bloom. Tom did not seem to require an answer to his question, for he went into the little back wash-room, and presently appeared in a linen coat and slippers, looking very handsome, as he always did at home. Over the delicate biscuit, which Gracie alone could make, Silent Tom told of his exploit. "Oh, Tom! you did *that!*" was the only answer, as Gracie set down the tea-urn, and a beautiful emphasis marked her manner. Then she got up, and quietly moved round to him and kissed him.—"Do you know I deserve some little credit for that matter?" was his response. "Upon my word, feeling as I do towards the child, it was almost worthy of Christian motives, but there wasn't the shadow of such an idea in my thoughts. I'm afraid to tell you what I really did think. You've heard me speak of old Simon Grue?"

"Yes, often. This girl is his niece, isn't she?"

"Yes, worse luck for me. See here, Gracie, that old man's property ought to have been mine,—every stick of timber, fence, and stone!"—"Tom!"—"No wonder you look at me, but I am telling you the truth, and *he* knew it. Once he went so far as to say that he should remember me, and if it hadn't been for this girl,—Santy they call her,—I believe he would. Do you see what good cause I have to love her?"—"Tom! don't speak and look that way! It hurts me."—"Well, I saved her life. Wasn't that equal to some of your Christian heroism?"

"Yes, Tom; it wouldn't have been you, if you hadn't tried your utmost. Oh, how thankful you'd ought to be that God gave you the power!"—"It was my own good muscle and strong nerves, my dear, and thanks to nobody!"

Gracie looked pained, and Tom's face took on a momentary gleam. "Suppose I'd been a weak, quailing, fainting

thing, like Jack Somers, next door? Where would your Providence have been, then? Miss Santy would have gone up, in more senses than one. No, my dear, it was ME."

Gracie turned the conversation upon the recent loss at the parsonage. "Another proof of my theory, my dear. Nature implanted the seeds of consumption in that young fellow's frame. He said he had a call to preach; of course the call was from God. Why didn't God give the necessary strength and vigour to his servant? Simply because nature was ahead. God said 'Preach!' and there was a dead failure; nature said 'Die!' and he died."

"Tom, I can't argue with you,—you know I can't," said his wife, with sudden heat, "but I know you're wrong, pitifully wrong!"—"Prove it," said Tom, opening another biscuit. "Boarding-school tried all its arts and graces on Reeves' wife, and look at her. Nature tried her finished hand on you, and look at *you*. Many a lady would be proud of your graces. I only wish I were a rich man for your sake."—"And what would you do, Tom?" There was a strange suppression of breath, an eager glance, a flush crept over the pale cheeks.

"Do? Not a thing! It would be my pride to see you just as you are now. No trailing silks, no follies, no fashions; I'd show the world, triumphantly, that riches couldn't change you; that it was impossible for you to go flaunting like the common herd, but you should have a carriage and horses, and plenty of money."

"Then you wouldn't buy *me* a piano-forte?"

"No; your voice is all the music I want. I hate instruments of all kinds, from the penny-whistle up to the church-organ."—"You wouldn't wish me to use my unoccupied time in the study of languages, or the sciences?"

"Of course not; what good would they do a woman? By-and-bye I should find you disputing every inch of

the way with me, and there'd be wrangling. No, no, let well enough alone. As you stand you are simply perfect; I don't want you spoiled."

Gracie's timid nature retreated into the back-ground, as usual. She had not been feeling well that day, and these home-thrusts from his unsuspecting lips went to her heart. If there were only some way out of this labyrinth into which she had so foolishly entered. "I reckon," he said rather bitterly, a few moments after, "this Santy will be turned out an accomplished young lady."—"Would it have made any difference with you if that dreadful thing had happened?" asked Gracie. "None, I suppose, for the reason that there was no will. Well, it don't hurt much, except the injustice of it. Ever since the day I was eight years old I have been dependent upon my own head and hands for everything I needed; I have suffered in adversity; my pride, my manhood have been trampled upon; I have learned fearful lessons of man's treachery; this last is only a few lines added to the original lesson; when I have it by heart, no doubt it will lose its sting. I have seen your good men, as you call them, stoop to mean deeds; I have seen them grind the poor, and hate them, while preaching equality in the sight of their God. Now I have thrown myself body and soul into the cause of the poor working-man. I mean, he shall no longer follow as others bid; he shall think for himself, to the very verge of what you call heresy. By the way, won't you go to the hall to-night? We're to have some nice questions under discussion."

"I really don't feel able," began Gracie. "There, that will do, I should like it better if you came out fair and said, you hated the whole thing, because we don't talk and argue and follow the old track as your minister does. He has got the upper hand of me, just now; but I have faith in nature; I have been before hand with him; I shall bring

you round.”—“Tom,” said Gracie, with a sudden energy in her voice and manner. “I’ll make a bargain with you; that’s fair.”—“Provided the bargain is a fair one. What is it?”—“If you will go to church with me next Sabbath, I’ll go with you to-night and put my feelings aside.”

“That’s frank and fair; I’m not afraid of church or minister, though, mind you; I know beforehand every argument he will make. I’ve heard a few sermons in my time, and read a few books,—heav’nly bodies of divinity, as they are called. All right.”

Gracie put on her shawl, and by this time the moon was shining. It was a calm, beautiful night, and in sweet, silent language, all nature seemed to speak of God.

CHAPTER XIV

AT FREE-STONE HALL.

“And so the Prince of Life in dying, gave
Undying life to mortals. Once He stood
Among His fellows on this side the grave,
A man perceptible to flesh and blood:
Now, taken from our sight He dwells no less
Within our mortal memory and thought,
The mystery of all He was and wrought,
Is made a part of general consciousness.”

THE rent in the rocks where Santy so narrowly escaped death, was perfectly visible in the shining light. Awful and grand stood the silent quarries, their successive reaches, like small areas of table-land, all flooded with the soft, bright rays of the moon. The mighty cranes were still, carts half-loaded burrowed their shafts in among the

loose stones and brown powder of the rocks. The derricks lifted ghostly arms towards the river; the river floated peacefully, and washed either sandy shore with its lessening tide.

"How eerie it looks!" whispered Gracie, clinging to Tom's arm,—“and how it makes me shiver to think if the blast *had* overtaken you!”

"Don't trouble yourself to think about it, little woman," said Tom. "Ah, there's the hall, and it's just lighted, I think. We're in time. There'll be some tall speaking to-night, so prepare for a treat. You mustn't mind the roughness of the audience, Gracie; there's mind among some of those fellows, rude as they look. Here we are!"

"Here we are!" thought Gracie, as she looked round at the bare walls, the seats without backs, the discoloured floor, and the numerous boxes filled with saw-dust, whose use was unblushingly evident; as she saw the score of young men, just out of the leading-strings of their minority, and some much younger, laughing loudly, using slang expressions, and, in one or two instances, swearing.

"And Tom," she thought, "is the leader, here."

Tom's coming was hailed with great applause. He did not seem to notice it, but led Gracie to a seat near two or three young women, whose manners and whose dress did not shock Gracie's sense of propriety.

One by one the audience gathered, sauntering in singly or in groups, ill-attired and generally rude in appearance.

Gracie thought of the neat and graceful interior of the pretty church on the hill, and all its accessions of reverence, order, and harmony, and her heart sank. She was determined, however, to let no carping spirit blind her eyes to whatever might be brought forward for discussion, if her conscience approved, no matter what the surroundings might be. The general aroma of the

atmosphere seemed to be divided between pea-nuts and tobacco. There was a great deal of whispered conversation; some low whistling, and now and then a fragment of the last popular air, audibly hummed.

Then came the speaker of the evening, a thin, sharp-featured man, not distinguished by any particular attributes of character as denoted by his face, which was merely commonplace. Gracie listened, determined to see all the good points that could possibly be put forward, but both ear and judgment were pained by the speaker's rhapsodies. The flippant irreverence with which he used the name of the Most High, in terms invoking the essential properties of matter; raving of the prodigious advance of the nineteenth century, and speaking in unmeasured contempt of the best minds of every other age; setting forth phrenology and mesmerism, and spiritualism, as the greatest of all reformatory agencies, and a great many utterances that Gracie felt it was degrading to hear. Through it all Tom kept up a running commentary of approbation. "Isn't that splendid? don't forget that."

"Poor, poor Tom!" thought Gracie, pitifully.

Presently the audience was startled by the rising of a venerable stranger whom Gracie had not before observed. His face, calm as that of some sculptured saint, was set in waving locks of hair, white as drifted snow; his eyes, large, dark, calm, looked gravely over the assembly as he asked, "Is this meeting for the free discussion on either side of any open argument?" The cry went eagerly forth, "Yes, yes! all right! take the stand."

The man whose tall form was bent with many years, went slowly forward to the platform, and there chained the audience with his eloquent protest to nearly all that had been said by his "brother," as he called him, sometimes "his mistaken brother."

His manner was so sweet and conciliatory, his language so beautiful, that none could choose but listen.

"In conclusion," said he, "I have been reading a book to-day, which treated of the very matter our brother has been holding forth upon. My memory is good, and I think I can repeat that sentence, or series of sentences that most attracted my attention. Our brother has been talking of theories. But says one of the characters from whom I now quote, 'You don't mean to assert that there is nothing in any of these theories?' 'Of course not,' was the reply. 'I can no more prove a universal negative about them, than I can about the existence of life in the moon. But I do say that this contempt for what has been already discovered, this carelessness about induction from the normal phenomena, coupled with this hankering after theories built upon exceptional cues; this craving for signs and wonders, which is the sure accompaniment of a dying faith in God, and in nature as God's work, are symptoms which make me tremble for the fate of physical as well as of spiritual science in this and every country.' As my brother talked, I could not help thinking of the Neo-Platonists of Alexandria, and their exactly similar course,—downward from a spiritualism of notions and emotions, which in every term confessed its own materialism, to the fearful discovery that consciousness does not reveal God, not even matter,—only its own existence. Onward it went in desperate search after *something eternal*, wherein to trust; toward theurgic-fetish worship, and the secret virtues of gems, flowers, and stars. Last of all, to the lowest depth of bowing statues and winking pictures.

"The sixth century saw that career, my friends, the nineteenth may see it re-enacted, with only these differences, that the nature-worship which seems coming, will be all the more crushing and slavish, because we know so much

better how vast and glorious nature is, and that the superstitions will be more clumsy and foolish in proportion as our brain is less acute and discursive, and our education less severely scientific than those of the old Greeks. My friends, that is the language I found ready-made for me, and here is something also out of a Book, with which I will close." He lifted his hands and looked benignly about him. His face lighted as that of a seraph, as he repeated, slowly and sweetly, the words, "*Other foundation can no man lay than that is laid, which is Jesus Christ.*" He sat down amidst perfect silence.

Tom was somewhat taken aback by this intrusion of diverse opinions, but he had often said to his wife, that all sides had a hearing at the hall, and though he held his lips tighter than usual, and had grown, from some cause, a shade paler, he sat quite motionless, while some business matters were attended to, for it was getting late. As for Gracie, a sudden, sweet peace had rolled down into her heart, so powerfully did she feel the presence of that spirit invoked by the godly old man. Even the noisy discussion that commenced, after everybody had drawn a deep breath of surprise, did not trouble her. What could be said now?

"If only they all knew Him!" she kept repeating, "oh, if only Tom knew Him; my poor, noble, deceived Tom!"

The tears crowded up to her lashes; her mouth trembled.

"Little woman, I guess we'll go home," said Tom, looking down a moment after; "it will be noisy after this, discussing the pros and cons."

So they stole quietly out of a door at the end of the building where they had been sitting, and wended their way home.

"Well, you cannot say but we are fair," said Tom in an altered voice.

"Yes, but oh, Tom! to my mind his words carried conviction."

"Of course, and they would to every priest-ridden brain, but not to me, not a bit of it." Here he went into a brief dissertation which Graeie was constrained to hear, but which fell almost powerless upon her ears.

"I still hold you to your promise to go to church with me," she said, when he had finished.

"All right; I'll hear the parson, only I'm rather tired of the old arguments. I'm dead set against the ethics of the Bible, Graeie; its impossible miracles, its revelations,—there's no use in talking."

"Then we won't talk, Tom," said Graeie, chokingly; "I can only hope——"

"Well, out with it, little woman."

"That sometime you will go with me; it would be so pleasant."

"Don't expect me to think thus and so because you do, little woman. That's what I call tyranny. No; I've made myself a free man. Doctrines don't shackle me. I'll listen to your parson, though I shan't bind myself to believe or even like what he says. I've a sort of hate for the whole thing, Graeie, and I might as well let it out,—a sort of hate," he said slowly, grinding the words between his teeth.

CHAPTER XV.

TRIALS THAT PURIFY.

"God's will is good. He knew what would be best;
 I thought last year to pass away from life.
 I thought my toils were ended and my quest
 Completed, and my part in this world's strife
 Accomplished. And behold about me now
 There rests the gloom, the glory, and the awe
 Of a new Martyrdom, no dreams foresaw,
 And the thorn-crown hath blossomed on my brow."

THE minister sat in his study, thinking out a problem that puzzled him not a little. How should he outwit the free-thinkers? How should he draw those sturdy young fellows away from the bar-rooms, the billiard-saloons,—amongst the lowest of the low,—the hall where, in his view, common decency was outraged by the ravings of the new-light philosophers, the founders of isms, the teachers of infidelity and atheism. In the midst of his cogitations the door opened softly. He looked up, and his face brightened at sight of Ruth, dressed simply in white. Her sorrow had tended only to etherealize her beauty. Her large eyes looked dreamily about, but they were not wholly unsmiling. She had never put on outwardly a sign of mourning; it had been *his* express wish that she should make no alteration in her dress. And indeed she could not mourn for one who, in the ripeness of his experience, had gone to put on the brighter robes of a heavenly purity. "If it will be a comfort to you," he said, "sometimes, to think that I am near you,—that I am sent as one of those ministering angels of which the Book

speaks,—think it, believe it with your heart. It may be God will permit me in some hour of sadness to whisper His presence; but remember, wherever I am, I am fulfilling His will. This is not the end of life, but the beginning of new work, the calling to higher duties in which I shall engage untrammelled either by flesh or sin. And whenever you are very happy, remember that I am happy for ever,—always happy in my Master's vineyard. It is only the dawn here; I am going where the sun will be gloriously risen,—Christ, the Sun of Righteousness. Don't wear any mourning for me, darling."

How could she, after that? At the last he had slowly taken a little book, with red morocco covers, from under his pillow. "When you can think without tears of how we parted," he said, "then read this. It may help you somewhat to endure other sorrows, should God in His infinite love call you to bear them."

She could not yet think of the parting without tears; consequently she had not yet read in the little book, though often anxious to. Always in her heart were the words, "wait a little," whenever she attempted to do so.

Ruth stepped lightly to the window, and busied herself with her flowers. Here she picked a yellow leaf, and there a faded petal. "Poor things! they need care," she said, touching them lovingly. "Are you going out to-day, Ruth?" asked the minister. "I did think of going to Stoneyhedge," she answered. "I found two or three books the other day that I think Santy will like."

"I would, dear; the walk will do you good; it's a lovely morning. If it wasn't for my sermon, I would go with you."—"I wish you could. I did think of walking to the quarries, but I didn't like to go alone."

"No, they're a hard set up there, and growing harder. I must find some way to counteract the influence of Silent

Tom and his colleagues. The village is fast becoming a little sink of iniquity. There's a new billiard-hall put up, and three more grog-shops down in the hollow. This will never do, Ruth. Our young men will be ruined."

"Why not turn the large vestry into a reading-room, papa? It is seldom used, and is one of the pleasantest I know of. If you could have good books and papers, and give interesting lectures and readings, and experiments in natural philosophy, you might, in a measure, outwit the infidels, as they call themselves."

"Ruth, that's a bright idea!" exclaimed the minister, starting up; "that's worth thinking about."

"Their hall is bare and comfortless, Gracie tells me,—Tom's wife, you know,—and our vestry can be made bright and beautiful with pictures and flowers. It wouldn't take long to carry a few plants there, and it might be easy to organize a small choir of singers, and learn some choice songs. On occasions, why not have a few cakes and apples? The cost will be trifling, and young people will come where there are lights, and music, and refreshments," she added, smiling.

"Ruth," my child, "when did you think it all out?" asked the minister in surprise. "I didn't take the trouble to think it out," said Ruth, "it has somehow come to me"—Ruth struggled a little—"since George died, that we need a cheerful, brave, and merry side to our faith; to drop religious phrases more, and lead a deeper, wider life of love, so that it can be seen and felt that our Christianity is something tangible,—something that includes more than our own salvation. Now you are smiling, papa; I suppose you think I'm invading your especial domain, and turning preacher."—"You certainly are my teacher in this matter, my dear, and I will think of it. I suppose you will not shrink from doing your part?"—"Anything I can do,

papa, I will do," said Ruth. "Now kiss me! I am going." Mr Eggleston kissed her with a great sigh of satisfaction.

"Dear child!" he murmured, as she left the room, "her sorrow has worked like a refiner's fire. I can see that she is more and more consecrated to the Lord." Ruth went into the kitchen to confer with Aunt Polly. "If ever ye heard such nonsense!" said that worthy woman, detaining Ruth with the slightest pressure of her knitting-needle, "as it was my ill-fortune to listen to last e'en. I went wi' neebor Sawnborn, wha' keeps the thread an' needle store, ye ken, to hear that nest o' vipers down to the ha,' an' upon my conscience, the poison's no oot o' my ears yet. Why, they talked o' the Lord o' our fathers wi' less respect than I wad of an old settin'-hen, and I could na' bear it, so I joost stood on my twa feet an' gie them a dressing-down. Says I, 'Look here, the Lord's gi'en ye brains to think, an' hands to wark, an' tongues to speak, an' ye'll tak His gifts an' use them as instruments of abuse; ye'll flaunt yer han's in His face, and laugh at His diveenity wi' the verra breath he's pit in yer nostrils. If yer ain bairns treated yer joost in that fashion, I pity the bairns. The Lord don't crack wi' his whip, as likes you would, but I tell ye, ye're laying oop for yersel's a fiery indeegnation!' An' now my skirt's clear,—but it wan't, on'y in a speeritoal manner, for Mrs Sawnborn was in that fear that she'd a'maist pu'd the gaithers oot 'l th' girdle. But, my certies, that fou' nest ought to be broken oop, an' if I was the meenester, I'd hae a't hosc whelps o' Satan dune for in some fashion. Why, Miss Rooth, it's downright deevilishness, an' that's joost what it is!"

Ruth could scarcely forbear laughing at the thought of Mistress Riggs, in her steeple-crowned cap, standing up in the midst of strangers when in any quiet assembly, uncounted gold would not have induced her to lift her

voice above a whisper. "What did they say to it?" she asked. "Oh, they joost hooted an' whastled like a set o' ontrained hounds they were. But my patience had given out, ooterly, and the Lord helped me to bear my testimony, which I'm not at a' ashamed of, though Mistress Sawnborn was that indeignant that she ranted at me a' the way hame, like a puir frightened body that she is. It's on'y that she's afeared they'll go to tither shop for their pins an' neddles, that's a'. My own part, I pity such bawble-bodies."—"You did just right, Aunt Polly," said Ruth.

"Verra gude in you to say so," replied Mistress Riggs in her loftiest tones, freeing Ruth's sleeve from the point of the needle; "but if his devilship had stood to the fore, I'd na' hae flenched fra' my dooty. Ye're gaun to walk, I see. Right an' proper, there's few balms like sunshine an' a road na' sae smooth as a carpit. "Ye'll go slaw, though, for your strength's nae' sae perfec' as it might be; an' ye'll take a shawl wi' ye, for weakness begets pairsperation, an' it stan's ye in han' to be carefu' "

Ruth went out with these words sounding in her ears. A month ago, and she would have laughed at them in the bitterness of her heart, would have welcomed any agent by whose help the wonderful cord of life might have been severed, so she could be free to go and suffer no more, but now they seemed full of a sacred meaning. It did stand her in hand to be careful, now that her life was precious to others, precious perhaps, in the sight of the Master who had work for her to do. Her heart grew lighter as she struck out of the ordinary path with its plank-walks, and moved along the grassy carpet of the fields, or wandered to the edges of the woods that June morning. Under her feet sparkled the clover in the yet undried dew, both white and red, and the butter-cups wore their crowns of gold most royally. All the merry denizens of air seemed out on

a frolic, from the crimson-breasted robin to the gauze-winged butterfly. The bees, brown and sober, rioted generally among the sweet cups of hidden flowers with a richer tone in their humming; every little hillock moss-covered, every little hedge, held its lap full of joyous life. The clover buds swung and seemed to touch fragrant lips together; the grass joined slender finger-tips, and nodded, and listened and whispered. Concerts with wonderful accompaniments were being held from the roots of the brown trees, to their topmost branches, where the bobolinks flitted.

"Everything is glad, everything is beautiful," said Ruth softly, "everything is *living*; there is nothing dead," and her very heart sang for a moment. "Christ the Lord is risen indeed," was her next thought, and half unconsciously she held forth her arms, as if to catch the sweetness of His presence. "Go where you will, you may carry Him with you," George had said, almost looking into heaven, as he spoke. "The time will come when earthly love will seem so narrow, compared with the fulness of that love which is in Christ Jesus," he had also said. "It will be sweet to live, sweet to die, sweet to sleep, sweet to waken, sweet to enjoy, and sweet to suffer." This he had murmured, holding her hand in his; and she was now beginning to believe it. "Sometime it will come," she whispered, "the rest and the peace, the utter peace, in which I shall look back and say, 'it was good to be afflicted.' 'One moment of that full consciousness,' *he* said, 'was worth more than centuries of pleasures or of inspiration.' Shall I ever know it. It was only when he was ready to depart that he learned what beauty there was in a perfect faith. I will live for it, and pray for it," she added earnestly, as the chimneys of Stoneyhedge appeared behind a clump of trees.

Santy saw Ruth from the window, and flung down her book. "Mit, get some pie on the table, and some

biscuit and butter!" she cried; "Miss Ruth is coming," and off she went, pulling her straw hat from its peg on the wall.—"Do you care to go in the house just now?" she asked appealingly. "It's so beautiful out doors! so pleasant, that I can't learn my lesson."—"Suppose you bring your book out on the porch," said Ruth, looking her over a little with smiling eyes, and perhaps I can help you."—"That's just what I *should* like," said Santy, and in she ran for her book, looking back to remind Mit of the eatables, and catching up a lovely grey cat that had been purring on the window-sill.

"There, that's elegant, and do you see my new cat? The butcher brought it, and I had such a time with her, but I think cream has cured her of home-sickness; I give her *real* cream, and she is looking beautifully."

"How has this child grown up with so few inelegancies of expression?" thought Ruth curiously. She did not then know that Simon Grue had been trained a scholar and a gentleman, and consequently what little talk Santy had heard in her nun-like life had been, when free from profanity, strictly correct; and more, that he would never allow the child to use coarse or unusual idioms. And that was the reason of her singular purity of expression.

Santy asked questions, and pored over the printed page; Ruth sat by her side, and answered and dreamed.

"We'll go down to the river, now, won't we, and into the wood-patch? I've got a play-house there," said Santy, when the task was done.—"Yes, I'll go with you," Ruth complied, rising. Was there anything in the atmosphere of this house that affected her spirits? she wondered, she had felt a breath of the old unhappiness while she sat there. But once out in the beautiful woods, the darkness was gone. It seemed to her that words were written all over the rustling leaves, and that in the soft, sweet

half-silence she could hear, like a musical undertone, the words, "God is love."

Santy led the way to a little knoll near the gnarled, rugged roots of a tree that had long ago rotted and been twisted off by lightning. The remainder of the trunk was quite hollow, and in that the girl had inserted her treasures. She took them out, one by one; toys with which she seldom played, but loved to think of and to handle as gifts.

"When I'm a grown woman," she said, "I mean to have a great many things. I'll have this house pulled down and build up another; such a splendid one, full of French windows, like them I saw down in the village that day I rode with the doctor. And then I'll build a school-house next door. Do you know, as soon as I can read easy in three or four syllables, I'm going to school?"

"I heard so," said Ruth. "Do you want to go?"

"I guess I do," replied Santy; "I'd like to know every thing,—but above all—" and she stopped short and looked at Ruth, "what makes people die?"

The question struck at Ruth's heart-strings, remembering how often she had asked it of herself. She sat down on the knoll, and took Santy's hand in hers, as she simply told the Bible-story of the fall. An eager listener was Santy, rewarding her with close attention. "And is that why?" queried Santy, drawing a long breath. "Wouldn't anybody have died if they hadn't been so wicked?"

"We have reason to think not," said Ruth. "Then," said Santy, "I wish I had been Eve, for I don't like apples, *much*,—and I think death is awful."

Then Ruth told her the story of the cross. Santy's eyes began to glisten. When it was made evident to her how cruelly the Son of Man suffered, that He might bring the world back to righteousness, the tears began to fall.

"I never heard of such a thing," she said, fervently,

much as an awakened heathen would, "and if people believe in Him, and love Him, will He take them, Himself, when they die?"—"Yes, we can be sure of that."

"To a world more beautiful than this?"—"So beautiful that no language can describe it."—"And we go right straight there from here?"—"If we love Christ, yes."

"Then I don't see that we need to care much, or make a fuss over it," said Santy, composedly. Ruth smiled faintly. She did not tell her what sundering of the heart-strings, what abnegation of self, what joyful prospects suddenly destroyed, the proper rendering of this word death, might signify. "If you grow to love people very much, though," said Santy, softly, "it must be dreadful to have them leave *you*, but to go *yourself* isn't so very much." Santy had unconsciously struck the chord that vibrated in the loving bosom of poor, lonely Ruth.

"I'm so sorry," she said, as Ruth wiped her eyes. "Won't you go in the house, now? It's ever so lonesome, but there's some luncheon on the table, I expect."

In spite of her tears, how could Ruth help smiling? Evidently the child thought that eating would make her feel better, it had so often been a panacea for her own woes. "You are young to be house-mistress," she said, rising, surprised at herself for really feeling hungry.

"I'm the real mistress, though," said Santy, a conscious pride in her manner. Even Mrs Saunders comes to me to know what I would like for dinner. Of course it's all mine, all this land, clear down to the quarries, almost. Mit says she's glad I'm so rich, because I shall never turn her away. She wants me, sometime, to build her a little house with three rooms, and buy her a cow, and some pigeons. Of course I will when I get old enough. I shall *always* take care of Mit," she added in a tone of importance. "Do you really think I am rich?"

"The land is worth a great deal of money, they say," replied Ruth, "and it is yours." Santy's face clouded when Ruth rose to take her departure. "It's awfully lonesome here," she said, "and it's so pleasant at your house." Ruth's face brightened, as she turned back.

"Would you like to go home with me?" she asked.

"Oh! might I?" cried Santy. "Yes, indeed, if Mit will do you up a bundle of clothes just for to-night; to-morrow I'll send for the rest."—"Mit! Mit, do you hear?" shouted Santy.—"It'll only be your night-dress, Miss Santy."—"Yes, and hurry,—shall I put my white aprons out, and my nicest frocks?"—"We'll see about that to-morrow, Santy; we can send up a list of what you need."

"And how long may I stay?"—"Till you are tired of me," said Ruth, with a smile.—"Then I'll stay for ever?"

Santy took her little bundle which Mit had arranged, and looking back, saw that the woman had thrown her apron over her face. "Don't cry, Mit," whispered Santy, going towards her. "I'll come and see you every few days." She pulled the apron down, kissed Mit between the two-shining eyes, said good-bye to the housekeeper, and was off. What a walk it was to Santy, in whose mind the picture of the quaint wooden parsonage, with it's bay-window, and charming garden, the study, so unspeakably beautiful, had been touched up many times by her excited imagination, till it seemed like a palace of enchantment to which her steps were bent. All at once she stopped suddenly. "You said till *I* was tired of *you*; won't you get tired of me?"—"I hope not," Ruth said, looking down at the eager face. "I think we shall always be good friends. Besides, I want something to do, and for a while I am going to be your teacher."

Santy clasped her hands together in a silent ecstasy. At last there was the place, with the old hitching-post beyond,

and the apple-tree over the fence, full of white and pink blossoms. Here lived the minister, whose first kindness she held in sacred remembrance; there was Scotch Mistress Riggs, whose brogue and whose cap were alike dreadful to her, and who shook her head at sight of Santy.

"I'm a little in doobt mysel'," muttered Aunt Polly, as she evened the edges of the snowy table-cloth. "A little in doobt about Miss Rooth taking the child in for a care. I'm na' sure but it's too much of a steemulant for ane o' her teemperament, but Miss Rooth's auld enough to judge o' her ain doin's; it's nane o' my concerns, only the bairn's a bit strange to me." Santy followed Ruth up into her own room. The little single bed upon which the nurse had slept during the young minister's illness,—for Ruth had given up this cheerful south room to him,—had not been removed. It was just the thing for Santy.

"Oh, how nice everything is!" Santy exclaimed, with a sigh of relief; "it exactly suits me."

It exactly suited her, everywhere, in the pantry, the kitchen, the shady parlour, and above all, the beautiful study. Her heart throbbed with a new sense of delight as the minister kissed her, and told Ruth she had done well to bring Santy home with her. To sit in the study after the lamps were lit, and look over a book filled with beautiful engravings while Ruth sewed, and the minister read the paper, this was bliss quite unexpected to the hitherto lonely and uncared-for child. Indeed, in after years she looked back upon it as a little foretaste of heaven.

And when the hour of worship came, and she dropped, wondering, on her knees, she felt a new influence enter her ignorant heart. "God bless and keep this child, and make her Thy shield." The words sank deep in her consciousness, and bore fruit in due season.

CHAPTER XVI.

THE RED BOOK.

"Nearer, my God, to Thee,
 Nearer to Thee;
 E'en though it be a cross
 That raiseth me,

Still all my song shall be,
 Nearer, my God, to Thee,
 Nearer to Thee!"

THAT night Santy learned to say something besides "Now I lay me down to sleep," for Ruth taught her a short, simple prayer. For several days the child was perfectly happy. She had access to the play-room that had belonged to Ruth, when she cared for toys, and it was delightful to walk, to talk, to study, with the minister's daughter.

One night she watched Ruth, after she had gone to bed, with great attention. "You always read out of that little red book," she said; "is it very pretty?"

Ruth looked up; "Yes, it is very beautiful," she said, with shining eyes. "Oh, Miss Ruth, let me hear a little, just a little of it!" Ruth was silent. It was a precious memento, this tiny volume, left only for her eyes to see; it seemed almost too sacred for idle ears,—but Santy was only a child. She could better understand the meaning herself by reading aloud, as that was one of her habits, and besides, some chance seed might drop in Santy's mind and do untold good. At all events no harm could possibly result. "This is not a printed book, Santy," she said; "it was written by a very dear friend of mine."

"Yes," said Santy.—"I'm afraid you won't understand."

"I'll try to," Santy said. "Very well, then, listen. It is what people call a journal, in which some of the

thoughts, and feelings and events of their lives are written down ; and here is where I am reading :—

“ June 1st.—The smell of the roses is very fragrant as I sit here at the window overlooking the old-fashioned garden. There is a sweet-brier twisting its slender branches with the more brilliant Provence rose. The fragrance of the sweet-brier carries me back to my mother’s side. She used to pick a tiny twig, and tell me to press it hard with my fingers, and the more I bruised it the sweeter it was. I shall never forget her beautiful lesson. ‘ God sometimes bruises His sweet-brier bushes,’ she said, ‘ to bring out more fully the perfume of their Christian graces.’ How often I have thought of these words since, though I did not at that time quite understand them. I shall strive to preach a *present* Christ. The majority of Christians with whom I am acquainted seem to me to come to the church, or the prayer-meeting, to get into nearness with HIM. They don’t take Him into their houses, and, more, they don’t take Him into their hearts. That is where He wants to live, not visit. He would be a daily, loving friend, a constant counsellor. He is always kept standing at the door,—and why ? ‘ *You treat no other friend so ill.*’

“ July—It came over me to-day with the suddenness of lightning, that I should not preach many more sermons. Curious, for I am in my usual health. I never was happier than at the present time, for I had just had a letter from R. Let me look at it straight in the face. I am young, twenty-four last December. I have many friends. I have good talents. I have passed my examinations with honour ; there is every prospect that my earthly affairs will be prosperous. What then is the matter with me ? Dear Christ, am I wanted up there ? and am I ready to go ? Ah ! the sweetness of entire consecration ! There is no fear in me when His love surges over my soul

like a wave of light. I see an open door, and the brightness beyond is greater than moral vision can bear. I see the face of one shining as the sun. What do these things mean? Are they special dispensations to show me that 'dying is but going home?' Well, Lord, do Thy will with me; I am a poor, wayward child, at best, but this I know, *I love Thee*, and Thy glory shall fill the earth. I have been brought into a condition in which my soul is as sensitive as the leaf which shrinks merely at the outstretching of the finger. I can almost hear Him say to me, 'my child!' From brain to heart there seems to be a luminous avenue, and the angels of his love are travelling thereon. My thoughts are almost prophecies; I see the time when Christ will not be a stranger to the world,—the world He died for. My Saviour is God manifest,—the God to whom I can speak in loving confidence, to whom I can pray, with whom I may claim loving fellowship.

"It is supernatural; nothing earthly, nothing sensual, purely spirit, purely Christ. How often I cry out, 'Oh, that all the world might know Him!' How men would shrink from themselves,—the best of them,—could they have one view of Him! Oh, to see them running hither and thither, putting their trust in ashes and bitter herbs,—for worldly fame and worldly wealth are only these,—ashes and bitter herbs! When will they come to my Father's arms? I must write dear R——, and ask her if she has found this perfect peace."

Ruth's voice trembled. She looked up, expecting to find Santy fast asleep. No, the child's eyes were glowing and widening,—fastened upon Ruth's face. "What was he writing about?" queried Santy. "Of Jesus Christ, the Son of God," said Ruth falteringly. "He loved Him dearly, didn't he? I couldn't understand it all, but I could see that. Do you love Him?"

"Yes, Santy, I do love Him!" replied Ruth, with a full heart. "So do I," said Santy, drawing a long breath; "I can't somehow help it."

It was the speech of a trusting child, but of only a child, whose courage has never been tried; but it comforted Ruth, who was beginning to see that faith was a reality, and not a beautiful myth. "Christ walked with him," she said softly, "as He walked with His disciples at Emmaus; will He ever walk with me as closely? I will not rest till He does; I will not rest till I feel that I can thank HIM, even for all my afflictions. I will have no lover, no friend, no guide but HIM." She locked away the little red book after pressing it to her lips, closed the curtains, put all things in order, kissed Santy, and then sought her rest.

CHAPTER XVII.

THE DOCTOR'S VISIT.

"Life is poor and faint below,
Never can its joy bestow
Pleasure on the pure in heart;
They pursue a better part;

O'er this dark and turbid sea
Hastening onward after thee,
Stayed by calms, by tempests driven,
All their hope, their aim is heaven!"

GRACIE WARWICK threw a light shawl on, tied over her head a fairy-like mesh of white zephyr, and wended her way to the minister's house, after leaving some directions with the tidy little girl who presided over the mop and duster. Aunt Polly answered the door-bell, and greeted the visitor in a rather ceremonious manner. It was enough to draw Aunt Polly's judgment upon her, that she was Silent Tom's wife.

"The awfu' infiddle!" she said, after bowing in her stateliest manner; "how Miss Rooth can hou'd converse wi' such, passes my comprehension. She's a weak-looking pairson, joost the one to be toppled over by such a godless set, poor fule! Heck! they'll a' bleeze together, if they don't look how they're goin'. It's the broad way to deestruction, nae broader to be constroected than ane built on the deveenity o' Christ. Poor fules! can't they see there's no ither way under heavn by which a man can be saved? If I was the Loord, I'd joost rain a little brimstone down on that dreadfu' hall, an' let them git a bit taste o' it aforehand!"

Poor Gracie, all undreaming of this anathema, went softly up into Ruth's room. Ruth sat with a book in her hand; Santy, on a low seat at her knee, looking up in her face in a sort of worshipful trance. "My dear friend!" cried Ruth, as at her 'Come in!' Gracie entered and sank into the nearest chair, "you are ill."

Gracie shook her head. "Only a little out of breath," she said, smiling at Ruth's look of sympathy. "Since my sickness I have never been very strong. Do I interrupt you? I was so lonesome, so—I didn't want to say wretched,—because—what will you think of me?—that I felt as if I must call and see you."—"You don't interrupt me at all, dear. Throw your things off and stay awhile, or go with us by-and-bye over to the vestry. Do you know we are going to get up a plan to 'coorcumvent the ha' folks,' as Aunt Polly says,"—and she laid the matter as she had proposed it to her father, before her.

Gracie's pale face grew alight. "I wish I could help you," she said anxiously, "for indeed this dreadful business is growing serious. They have got a new saloon, and my husband has put money in. He says he shall realise a fortune, but oh, Miss Ruth, I had rather go a

beggar to my grave than that Tom should peril his soul. He has always been honourable, steady, and upright; but now, God help him!"—her voice broke; "I've no right to burden you with my troubles," she added with a queer little dash of spirit, "and I won't!"

"If it is any relief to you do not hesitate to come to me," said Ruth. "I want to live for others, and there is no better way than to know the trials and griefs of other poor hearts. We are going right to work in the vestry, and as we must get up a society, I propose myself to go among some of these people and see if I can interest them sufficiently to join it."—"They're a very rough set, Miss Ruth."—"Yes, I don't doubt it, the most of them; but I never knew a man yet to treat a woman who respected herself, in any but the most courteous manner. They will be civil, I am sure, even if they refuse me. Of course we mustn't expect to convert them all at once; but if we can draw them from their vicious haunts, we shall do much."—"And I am so helpless. I can do nothing," said Gracie.—"Oh, yes; you can pray that the good work may succeed."—"Yes, I will try; but see what my prayers do for Tom; he is not so kind as he was; I don't mean that he is personally unkind, but he seems to dislike my mode of life more than ever. I wish sometimes that I had kept the whole matter a secret. Poor Tom! I don't let him know how it worries me; and he is so naturally noble and good, that I am sure if it were not for the meetings at the hall, and the associates that he sees there, he would be another man."—"Was he the man that saved my life?" asked Santy, who had seemed to be poring over the book which Ruth had relinquished to her.

"*You* are the child!" exclaimed Gracie, regarding her with new interest; "strange!" she added to herself.

"He frightened me half to death!" laughed Santy,

"because I saw him coming so,"—beating her arms about—"and I thought he was a crazy man, and wanted to hurt me; but if he hadn't caught me I'd been dead. I ought to make him a very handsome present, hadn't I, Miss Ruth? Wait till I'm a lady grown, and see if I don't?"

"If you're at leeberty, Miss Rooth," spoke Aunt Polly, looking grimly in, "here's Doctor Willis wishes to see you joost a minute, he says; likelier he'll stay a good hour," she added, as she shut the door, "an' keep me oot o' my dustin! What wi' ane thing an' another, the house never gits a fare face to it till the day's dune." Ruth excused herself to Gracie, and ran lightly down-stairs. Doctor Willis was one of her best friends, doubly endeared to her by his constant and careful attention to one who had been so near to her, was so near to her now, although he had passed out of her sight, and far beyond her plane.

The doctor rose as she entered. "I won't detain you, Miss Ruth, but it is so natural to bring our bad cases to the minister, who seems to have a kind of little omnipotence in his way; besides, I was asked to come." Ruth smiled, and her manner said, "please state the case."

"As I saw the minister was out, I thought the next best helper would be his *aide-de-camp*, as he calls you sometimes. There's a Mrs Davis lives up by the quarries."

"Yes, I know her," said Ruth."—"Did you know what a good-for-nothing son she has, too?"—"I have only seen the son once or twice; he seemed to be a strong, good-looking young man."—"Strong and good-looking, I grant. He broke his leg, and I was so grievously unfortunate as to bring him well through a dangerous illness, into a tolerable state of health again."—"Oh, doctor, what a way to state it!"—"Just so, but I mean exactly what I say, for that young fellow has kept me in a chronic state of inflammation ever since, and there's nobody to cure me,"

he added, with a grim smile. "Doctors get but very little sympathy, did you know it? and in such cases no money at all. Well, the woman was taken down, and of course I attended her; saw she was dejected, strengthless, laid by, but all this time this graceless son of hers has been returning her unwearied devotion over his sick bed, by getting drunk at that new saloon just opened there, knocking her down and abusing her generally, and there she lay, afraid of her life, but, woman-fashion, declining to inform against her young brute. If you'll say to the parson, with my compliments, that I'm a new convert to the dogma of total depravity, I'll be obliged to you." His look of distress was so comic yet so genuine, that Ruth laughed in spite of the horror of his story.

"What can be done?" she asked. "Sure enough, that's just what I want to know myself. The poor distressed soul has unlimited faith in your father's powers of persuasion. 'Only ask the minister to talk to him,' she said, when I found it out, by discovering a great bruise on her neck. I'd rather have whipped the fellow myself, but I pity the poor forlorn soul. She's had losses and crosses enough to be let off scot free for the rest of her life, it seems to me, but this young tiger has got some grandfather's blood in him, which I suppose that vile liquor turns to fire. Before I practised, Miss Ruth, when I was in the green bark of my profession, as merely a study, I went back on the Bible in some degree. I called the Creator a hard master, but since then I believe I can swallow the toughest theological dicta, and back the assertion that the sins of the father descend to the children, even to the fourth generation, by my own limited experience. However, I have neither the right nor the time to run on in this manner. Will you speak to the doctor himself? though what good he can do, now the extra grog-shops have been set going, is more

than I can tell."—"I will speak to him ; I'll go with him and see poor Mrs Davis myself."—"Thank you ; I suppose you know I have taken a seat in church."—"We were pleased to see you there on last Sunday," said Ruth.

"It's not best perhaps to tell you that I may occasionally hire somebody to interrupt the services by summoning me now and then, in presence of the whole congregation, for the sake of a good business-advertisement."—"No, I don't think it is best," said Ruth, laughing in spite of herself. "Santy is with you ; I thought I saw her face at the window."—"You did ; I'm going to keep her a while."

"Is she sowing her wild oats comfortably ?"—"Very."

"She came nigh sowing them rather *uncomfortably* at the quarry last month. Good-morning, my respects to your father, and I hope he won't spare that young blackleg."

CHAPTER XVIII.

PICTURES AND MUSIC.

"Music ! oh how faint, how weak,
 Language fades before thy spell.
 Why should feeling ever speak,
 When thou can'st breathe her soul so well ?
 Friendship's balmy words may pain,
 Love's are e'en more false than they ;
 Oh ! 'tis only music's strain,
 Can sweetly soothe and not betray."

MEANTIME Gracie had been regarding Santy with unmitigated curiosity. She was the small cloud upon Tom's future. Her husband had told her that he had a claim upon Simon Grue, but not what the claim was. All her questions, suggestions, and ponderings were powerless to

gain Silent Tom's confidence on the subject. Contending vainly against her curiosity she puzzled her mind with perplexing suspicions, all of which failed to bring discovery any nearer. She took a mental memorandum of the child as she sat there, a little under-sized, well-formed, pretty hands, large and somewhat restless eyes, beautiful brown hair, a wide, well-shaped forehead, ordinary nose and mouth, fine contour, on the whole an amiable-looking child with latent force of character slumbering beneath the surface. "Were you very much frightened that time, at the quarry?" she asked when she had quite satisfied her eyes. "Oh, dreadfully!—but that was after it was all over; he held me so hard, and he jumped so!"

"Just like dear Tom!" murmured his wife, the tears in her eyes. "Did you ever see him before?"

Santy nodded, twice, thrice. "Did he ever come up to your uncle's?" Santy nodded again. "Lots of years ago, when I was very little. I remember him; after I got home I thought out, and I remembered. He hadn't anywhere near such a beard then,—and once"—she laughed heartily at the recollection—"once he almost frightened my uncle to death, he eat *so much* bread for supper."—"It must have been years before I saw him," murmured Gracie. "And they talked, and talked, and talked!" Santy continued. "I heard 'em 'most all night; but in the morning he was gone, and my uncle was as cross! He wouldn't let us put but one stick at a time on the fire all day,—and I almost froze."

Santy hugged herself and shivered. Gracie caught the infection of her imagined chill, and shivered, too. Shivered partly because of the alteration she had noticed in her husband, after he had saved Santy's life; because of the deep after deep he was descending in scepticism and infidelity, beginning now to laugh openly

at the truths which were so precious to her ; talked of the decrees of fate, of a man as a vegetable, and God as a mountain. Such frightful convictions as these must necessarily develop more of evil than good in any nature, however morally upright, fair, and generous. The constant assumption of inferiority, though unwittingly made, the drifting apart from all outward obligations concealing the powers of darkness as well as of light ; cutting loose from these social barriers, which, next to the sanctities of home, develop the highest instincts of man's emotional nature, must of necessity make one more of an animal and less of an angel. Gracie had not told the solemn sorrow that had made her heart ache since she had last met Ruth. Silent Tom had come home the worse for drink, and drink brought into play all his vicious propensities. To be sure he was not drunk in one sense of the word ; he walked straight, and talked straight, and but for a suspicious thickness of speech and a wild glitter of the eye, and bitterness of the tongue, Gracie would never have suspected the truth. "Was this trouble to be added?" she asked in prayer that night,—“this heavy, heavy cross to be carried? It don't seem as if God had laid this burden upon me,” she said sorrowfully, reflecting upon it afterward ; “it is man's infliction, and ought not to be. They shall not make a brute of my husband. Did your uncle ever speak of him?” she asked abruptly, after a few moments of silence.—“No ; he never spoke of anybody much. When he was at home we were always silent.”

Again Gracie remarked, somewhat timidly, “Did your Uncle Simon look at all like Mr Warwick?”

“Who's Mr Warwick?” asked Santy.—“My husband ; the man who saved your life.”—“Oh, dear, no?” said Santy, with an amused little chuckle,—“no indeed!”

“Then of course he was no relation,” sighed Tom's wife

to herself.—“Papa has sent word that we are to come up to the vestry,” said Ruth, looking in, shawled, and with her hat in her hand. “It’s lovely out, and you must go, Gracie, and make some suggestions. Come, Santy.”

The child made herself ready, eagerly, and presently the three were walking up the street which led to the church. The birds were pouring out whole harps-full of melody,—indeed, the trees in the area before the beautiful edifice seemed filled with the little feathery songsters.

Dork’s boy, as the sexton’s son was called, stood in the doorway, and took off his hat as Miss Ruth and her friend made their appearance. The minister sat on the broad platform in the large vestry, looking about him. Under his direction the seats had been arranged in a semicircle, and from the eight long windows came wide streams of sunshine, flowing across the neatly-carpeted floor, making the room as cheery, and bright, and social as if it had been filled full of company. A neat little desk occupied the centre of the platform,—a handsome piano-forte, the gift of one who had recently gone home, stood at the right.

Gracie’s eyes sparkled at sight of the instrument, but she said nothing. “Pictures!” cried Ruth.

“Yes, I begged some and borrowed others,” said her father. “They are not all in the highest style of art, but they serve to give colour and expression, and are very effective against the white walls. Many of them are on Scripture-subjects, and the judge says he will get me some more. That fine picture of St. Paul he was kind enough to take out of his parlour, and says I may have it till the society proves a success, which God grant it may.”

“Amen!” said Ruth, fervently.

“We must get a stock of notices out, Ruth, on our little home printing-press, that there will be a lecture on a given subject, with music and refreshments. I am

certain we can get plenty of cake from the ladies, several of whom have promised me a good supply. The bills must then be carried to the quarries and distributed freely. I am sure we shall catch some with this bait. Our singers are all busy getting up some new pieces, and I think we shall do well."

Ruth and Gracie, followed by Dork's boy and Santy, went up into the church, after Ruth had given the doctor's message to her father. Gracie looked longingly at the organ, a small but powerful instrument that with its polished pipes glittering in the sunlight seemed to hold a certain benign sweetness in its glittering front. "It does seem as if I should be happy if I could play it only once," whispered Gracie. "Then you shall," said Ruth; "I know where the key is. Dork's boy don't know who you are, and I am sure Santy will not speak of it to any one."—"Indeed I won't," said Santy.

Ruth hastened up to the organ-loft; Gracie tremblingly followed. The boy was stationed at the bellows, the organ-door was opened, and the little woman sat down almost overcome with the intensity of her own emotions.

The notes gave at first an uncertain sound, then gradually as her fingers became accustomed to the long unwonted exercise, the sweet tones rolled out higher, stronger, richer, and her face became almost as the face of an angel.

Ruth had taken the precaution to lock the front door, and the minister wondering that his daughter should be in such good spirits,—for he thought she was the organist,—came upstairs to listen. "Really, that is very wonderful music," he said to himself, and walked down the aisle, where, looking up, he saw Ruth standing near the choir-railing, her face dropped in her hands. "My poor child!" he thought, sorrowfully, "now no chastening for the present seemeth to be joyous, but grievous," and then,—

"That is the wife of Silent Tom!" and he stopped and gazed with astonishment towards the performer. "It is like a requiem," he said softly, "so sad! so tender! Poor child, she sings out of her heart; but what heavenly melodies! Is this the woman who married a worker in the quarries? And she dares not tell him! Why, any man might be proud of such a wife."

He sat down beneath the pulpit and listened, and listened, till it seemed to him the angels had come down and were joining their sweet voices in these almost divine harmonies. "A vine struggling in a poor soil," thought the minister; "what an acquisition these gifts would be to the service of Christ! I must strive for that man's soul; it will not do to let him herd with devils, while an angel might win him to the holiest enjoyments." Ruth looked up, pale and sad, but seeing her father, nodded to him smilingly. Santy sat at the feet of the player, quite entranced; Dork's boy was only concerned about keeping the wind in, and toiled back and forth at the bellows. Suddenly Gracie paused, and a few weird tones died lingeringly on the silence. "What have I done?" she exclaimed, with a frightened face.

Ruth turned round. "You have comforted me," she said softly. "I never heard anything so beautiful!" spoke up Santy. "And I feel almost guilty."—"I only wish your husband could have heard you!" Ruth rejoined. "You don't know what you wish," Gracie said mournfully. "Pluck up spirit, dear, and tell him," whispered Ruth, as they left the organ-loft. Gracie shook her head. "I have tried to, but have always failed," she said. "I can't make you understand it, I suppose," she added, in a low voice. "Tom is so very proud,—so peculiar in his pride. If he thought I had been in better circumstances, that I knew more than he did,—I mean had been more thoroughly edu-

cated, and yet concealed it,—oh, you can see at once how it would wound him; in what a light I should appear. No, I can't do it yet; I can only pray and labour for him, and sometime God will change his heart, though through what bitter trial who can tell? Then, when he sits down at the Master's feet, like a little child, I shall give him my whole history, and not be afraid."

"When he sits down at the Master's feet!" The words thrilled Ruth's heart to the core. It had been a favourite expression of her dead friend's,—friend more than any mortal soul could be to her in this life, "Sitting at the Master's feet." She seemed to see the beloved Christ, with a face which no pencil has ever reproduced, so filled was it with the power of divinity; she seemed to feel the welling glance of those eyes that wept over Jerusalem, and smiled forgiveness on repentant sinners; she seemed to listen to the heavenly music of His voice sounding in words such as never man spake. She seemed to thrill at the touch of hands that had sent the mighty sun rolling on his endless mission, and that had also bound up the wounds of the afflicted and the transgressors; she seemed to see standing before her the glorious incarnation of that Holy One, before whom angels and archangels veil their faces, while she sat humble—and yet no queen could hold a position so exalted,—*at the Master's feet*. Santy ran on talking at her side of the wayside flowers; of the sweet-brier and southern-wood that grew so freely and rankly at Stoneyhedge, of the wide, soft, blue heaven, with fleecy clouds, which she called "dear little lambs," flecking it in spots. Gracie moved quietly along, wrapped in her own sombre thoughts, while a pure and powerful flame was being kindled in the heart that had been made receptive by sorrow and loss. A solemn passion,—so solemn and yet so sweet, that it brought tears to her eyes,—took pos-

session of her soul. Of how much worth seemed the world to her then; and men and women, soiled with their own selfishness, and living their little, narrow lives, knowing not what guests they entertained. Dreaming not that, living absolutely out of self, emptying of self, abnegating self, was the only true way to secure the happiness they were for ever seeking. "Lord, send me!" she said, fervently; "let me so carry Thee with me that I shall persuade men to come to Thee!" Santy, looking up just then, whispered to Mrs Warwick, "Don't Miss Ruth look beautiful?"

Gracie turned to her friend and caught a little of the radiance of her countenance as Ruth smiled, still almost too much pre-occupied with her new and powerful emotions to change them for the commonplaces of conversation. "I'm sure you are very happy," said Gracie.

"Why?"—"It shines in your face; its peace falls upon me. Oh, Ruth, *this* is real, if all else is false!"

"Yes," said Ruth, with the rare smile illuminating her features again. Ruth knew what she meant. "I think you are a great many heights ahead of me," Gracie responded again. "Give me your hand, sometimes, when the way is toilsome."—"Suppose HE gives you His hand instead," said Ruth, gently; "my strength is nothing, but His is sufficient."—"I know it," said Gracie, "but there is something in you that to me answers to the divine consciousness more readily; you are strong,—I am weak."

"If I am strong," said Ruth, softly, "it is through Christ, who strengthens me."

"Do you know some people would call this kind of talk cant?" queried Gracie. "I think about it, sometimes, when I see some religious books stigmatized as full of religious affectations, by those who read them. If one's conversation all ran on fashions, or gossip over neighbours and the ordinary duties of life, it would be well enough,

but to talk of interests that concern our well-being far into the eternal world, that is 'cant,' and 'spiritual enthusiasm.'"

"Yes, but I fancy the disciples talked of Christ, and of very little else," answered Ruth; "Mary and Martha were not ashamed to call Him their Lord, and doubtless spent hours in bringing the delightful memories of His past visits to mind. His name was in the mouths of all the people; His looks, words, manners, and habits were continually criticised and described; the little children in Judea in the midst of their play ran to each other with the words, 'Have you seen the Christ? Did He bless you? did He put His hands on your head? How sweetly He spoke when He called us His lambs! Wasn't He beautiful? Don't you love Him? I am always going to follow Him, and when I am a man I will go with him as the disciples do.'"

"I wish he was as real a presence to us!" said Gracie, with a sigh.

"He may be," Ruth responded.

"Do you believe that?"

Ruth's eyes shone, there was hardly need of the words that followed.

"I *know* it."

Surely as the young minister had said, "His work was going on." He had not been laid aside when the earthly tenement had crumbled into dust.

Santy had lingered behind, and was now coming on, hand in hand with the minister,

CHAPTER XIX.

WOMAN'S WORK.

"Christians have burned each other, well persuaded
That the apostles would have done as they did."

"Yes, Thou art ever present, Power Divine,
Not circumscribed by time nor fixt in space,
Confined to altars, nor to temples bound."

"WEEL, weel, ane can't joost ken what to ca' yoong Doocotor Willis," said Miss Riggs, as Ruth stood by the cake-board, deep in the mysteries of savory-smelling mixtures, "'twas an awfu' funny pome, that he read at the Leeceum last night, an' I'm no' a leetle suspeecious mysel' whather sic light literatoor is gude feeding for the im-mairtal mind. An' wha' do ye think he ca'd the Leeceum? I was stannin' by, nibbin' a wee bit o' neebor Sawnborn's jally-cake,—neebor Sawnborn's a good Chreestian, and a donee store-keeper, an' has the makin' o' a nice, cheeritable mitherly body, but I man say her jally-cake was the sairest coompoun' o' salereetus, an' stale jally. I'm no remeemberin' whether it were coorant or grap', but I wad na pit sich a meeserable combineetion."

"Pray tell me what the dootor said, Aunt Polly."

"You're very inqueesitive," Miss Riggs responded, with a quick, suspicious look at Ruth, "an' I'm na' after for-gittin' what I'm gaun to say; though I do ramble aff, it's for a purpose. Weel, the doocotor said, in my hearin', 'The meenester's gat oop a veera nice deevil's net,' an' that's what he said, an' mighty onceevil I thocht it, too."

"He meant well, I dare say," Ruth responded, frothing the eggs with a silver fork.

"Oh, yes, ye're alwus apologeezing for the doctor, who's na' a speeritoal pairson, an' maks his jookes in the verra hoose o' God."—"But, Aunt Polly, I think he said just right, only he expressed it a little too strongly, perhaps; he meant father had spread a net to catch wicked people in,—that is, had made a place attractive, where they would be more inclined to go than in those dirty saloons."

"It may be a' verra weel," said Miss Riggs, tossing her cap-spire, "but to my notion, a choorch is a choorch, an' a' these new-fangled ways don't look like gude screepter wark. It's a' vanitee gittin' oop to sing, an' speak, an' thin tuk' in a coop o' tea as ye'd do in ainy one's deening-room. Why doon't they coom down wi' th' auld-fashioned dooctrines, an' tell them where they're gaun to? Weel, weel, we don't hear the sairmons now that we heard ance; 'twould leeft the hair stret fra' yer head to listen to auld pairson Riggs, that war my mither's half-unele. My certies! he mad' th' torments glower till ye felt the verra coals at yer feet. There was convairtin' power in sie wras'lin an' preachin'."—"But our meetings have done a great deal of good, Aunt Polly. There's even talk of shutting up one of the saloons."—"Heck, they'll be like the flies o' summer, I'm thinkin', kill ane an' twinty'll cun to it's funereal. My certies, but ye dinna see the girls flairtin' roun' about th' young men, as I did."—"Young men and young maidens will be merry, Aunt Polly; remember you were young yourself, once."—"I'm na' sa' auld," responded Aunt Polly, curtly, dripping the dough from a pie-plate; "saxty's a lang way aff fra' me, but young pairsons are that disreesspectfu' noo a days that they're a'ways beentin' at a body's age. Well, I'm verra glad if the meenester can pu' feesh in his net, that way, but for a' that I don't conseeder it the gospil despenseetion way—nae a bit o' it."

Aunt Polly was wrong in her convictions though

generally right in her conclusions. She put great faith in what she called the terrors of the law, and had but little mercy for transgressors. No money could have tempted her to sing "Home, Sweet Home," or, in fact, any other songs than those of the great Jewish king, the psalms of David. Her method was as severe as her morals; she was what a hard, unlovely religious training had made her, and though for 'variety's' sake she sometimes made one of the pleasant gatherings which she denominated a Leeceum, the 'do'ins,' were not agreeable to her. As for the hall, her abhorrence for that and the persons who attended it was almost too strong to be put in words. As the reader knows, she had given her testimony in clear language in that place, and never afterwards saw a bill advertising a lecture that she did not with her own hands tear and mutilate it if it hung within her reach.

The weekly vestry meetings had proved a grand success; though the free thinkers still continued to meet at their old accustomed place, they did not gather in so many of the young. Ruth had formed a sociable for girls, mostly of the poorer classes, and among these she encouraged reading and sewing, keeping their sympathies alive by some wholesome stimulant in the shape of Charity, to work for. They all loved Ruth because they read in her eyes her love for them. Not one of them but was elevated and refined by her companionship. Little by little they learned that it was not fine clothes, nor yet a liberal education that could give them the distinction of lady-bred; that they could be genuine, without being showy; that a fine person and brilliant attainments were often connected with barren hearts, stained souls, and shallow minds. Day by day she dropped the good seed of the kingdom, inculcating sweet and tender counsels, and above all the precepts of our Lord. Here was where

the work lay, and she saw, sometimes, the fruit of her labours. She little knew how often a kind word of hers turned a heart's bitterness to honey. She little thought how she was copied and studied, that they to whom she gave such precious instruction might come up somewhere near her standard.

"You've helped me stay, Miss Ruth, and *bear*," said one of them long after the disturbing trouble had occurred. "I had such times at home that I made up my mind I would run away and seek my living somewhere, and I was not to go alone;" she added, blushing painfully. "I had everything made ready, and I thought nothing could turn me that time you told us of our duties to our parents and our homes, if you remember. I asked you some questions and you answered them, so that I felt you must be right, and you talked all that evening to me. It was curious, too, that you stated a case almost exactly like my own, and you can't tell how I felt; I thought you must certainly have heard about it. And then when you took my hand as I was going, and said so seriously, '*Bessy, be sure you can ask God's blessing on all you do,*' I thought I should fall, for I knew I couldn't ask His blessing on what I was thinking of. It was an awful struggle, Miss Ruth, to put away all my plans, and decide to go on and bear my troubles, but what you had said so fastened itself in my mind that I didn't dare to go. And oh! Miss Ruth, what do you think?" she added tremblingly, "the one I was to meet is this day in a prison-cell. What might have been my fate if it hadn't been for you? Miss Ruth, I never can be grateful enough." And others of those humble folk would willingly have knelt and kissed the hem of Ruth's garment. Was not that a woman's prerogative for which to be thankful? teaching of Jesus under the banner of love? aiding in saving souls?

Santy was making fair progress in her studies. At times restless, at others wilful, still she submitted with tolerable grace to the restraints imposed upon her at the parsonage. Her greatest punishment was to be sent to Stoneyhedge, and it was seldom resorted to. She began to display a remarkable talent for drawing, and in particular for planning houses and grounds. Her feeling of ownership in connection with Stoneyhedge was the motive that set her brain at work in this direction. It had almost become a mania with Santy. How Stoneyhedge should be beautified; how its gardens should bud and blossom, how its walks should be laid out. At first her drawings were very crude, her lines wanting uniformity, her distances finish, but Ruth gave her directions and a rule, and left her to find out her defects in her own way. When everything was done to her satisfaction, Ruth was called to command and admire. "You have made it very like the parsonage," Ruth said. "I thought you intended to have a stately house."—"So I did, at first," Santy answered, "but I am so fond of the parsonage, that when I have to go away I want to live in a house exactly like it; so I'm to have a study with a bay-window in it, as you see, and I want it furnished as nearly like the parsonage as possible; and then I expect," she added with a touch of sadness, "I shall want you and Mr Eggleston there, but I can't have that."

"No, dear, we can't have all we want in this world!" said Ruth, but she said it very cheerfully.

"You have," said Santy bluntly. Ruth shook her head. "I said in this world; I have been disappointed in many things."—"Then what makes you so cheerful?"

"Because God is so good to me, and heaven is so near."

"How can heaven be near, when you're alive? It seems to me that heaven is away off—farther than the sky."

"Don't you remember last Sunday's text, 'The kingdom of heaven is *within* you'?"

"I never heard so little of a sermon in my life," said Santy naively. "I couldn't think of anything, I expect, but my new dress. I'd try to listen, and then I'd see the ruffles, or think of my hat, or be afraid of tumbling my skirt, or something, all the time. Do you think of yourself, that way, when you're all new?"

Ruth smiled. "I suppose I did, more or less, at your age," she said, "but I had a mother that taught me that a true lady thinks but little of her clothes after she is becomingly dressed, for it makes one very awkward, or disagreeable, or vain, to feel continually that something may be wrong, that a dress may be spotted or wrinkled, or that possibly everybody is looking at or admiring one. It is very easy to be graceful and elegant in quite an ordinary dress, as well as a fine one."

"How?" asked Santy. "By forgetting all about it. In my Sunday-school class I have had girls so completely absorbed in the supposed splendours of their new gowns and hats, that I could scarcely gain their attention at all. They had a good lesson, though, one Sunday."

"What was it?"—"A poor creature who had lost her mind, wandered here from another town, and came into the school one morning. I can give you but a faint description of her appearance. She wore an old straw hat completely encircled with feathers, that she had probably picked up in the road. A ragged towel served for a veil, long strings of dirty cotton-cloth for ribbons and streamers. Her wrists were encircled with bits of straw and curled shavings; I suppose she imagined they were gold bracelets. Her dress was very untidy, but tricked out with fantastic bows and fag-ends of dirty finery; but to crown the absurdity of her attire, she had fastened a miserable piece of

flannel,—once perhaps a blanket,—to her waist, and it trailed half a yard behind her, filthy with the mire of the roads. I never saw such a satire upon the fashions of the day, as she strutted with all the airs and graces she could command, the whole length of the school-room.”

“Didn’t everybody laugh?” queried Santy.

“It was impossible to avoid it, much as one might regret it, but fortunately it was time to dismiss the school, and the poor creature was sent away, but not before she had pointed a moral for my class at least. I happened to know her history. Her father had been a very rich mill-owner, and she was a fashionable girl whose foolish heart was bound up in dress. A haughty, selfish, heartless creature, she cared for nothing but how she might outshine her equals, so that when ruin came to her father, who had involved himself by speculation in gold mines, she had nothing to fall back upon but the recollection of past grandeur. But there was no help for her; her father ended his own life in a fit of despair, and her mother died shortly after. She herself was obliged to go in the mills to earn her daily bread, and this she considered degradation so complete, that brooding upon it she lost her reason, and has ever since been that wreck, always fancying that she is the queen of fashion.”

“Dear me,” said Santy gravely, “I’ll never be proud of dress again as long as I live. If I should lose everything, I shouldn’t like to come to that. But still I don’t see how heaven can be near the best of us.”

“But you forget that text, ‘The kingdom of heaven is within you.’ I’m sorry you didn’t catch a little of the sermon.” Santy blushed and felt heartily ashamed.

“I’m old enough to hear, and old enough to remember,” she said. “Next Sunday when I go into the pew, I’ll put myself in a corner out of sight; see if I don’t.”

Ruth smiled. "A good idea," she said, "but I want you to understand how one can live in heaven. Heaven is all love. Whoever lives in heaven must be filled with love to Christ and love to God. The angels all love Him. Those disciples that knew Him on earth, into whose houses He went, those women who heard His sweet voice, those little children who nestled so close to His side, all who have died for His truth, all the martyrs, all the kings who worshipped Him, all great minds who have trusted in Him, love Him, and all the kingdom of heaven is love. Love is the great controlling power of God, and if we love God, love Him so that we try to cultivate faith, hope, joy, peace, long-suffering, humility, meekness, all things pure, and just, and holy, don't you see we have taken Jesus right into our hearts; we have taken the very same beautiful virtues and affections that make heaven what it is? But suppose you prefer fashion, and riches, and good things to eat and drink; prefer to dance, and revel, and talk against your neighbours; prefer vice, and scandal, and coarse pleasures, and vulgar thoughts; prefer to be selfish and heartless, rather than to put yourself out to do for others, even if those others seem not to deserve it; suppose you prefer the false to the true, hate of God and His angels, instead of love, don't you see just as clearly that those things shut Christ right out of our hearts as really as if I said, 'Santy, I prefer this or that child to you; your presence is disagreeable to me, go out of this room,' and then I shut the door and bolt you out?"

"Oh!" cried Santy, with a real burst of grief, "you never, never will do that, will you?"

"I hope not," replied Ruth, folding both arms about the impulsive girl. "But suppose you said to me, 'I don't like to have you near me.'"

"I won't hear another word!" cried Santy, all aglow

with indignation, "as if I *could*! as if it were possible! I guess I see how it is; if we try to be good we invite good thoughts; if we ask Christ to come and live with us, we must have,—why, I'll tell you,—we must always have our best things out, best furniture, best food, best china, and all these mean our best thoughts and actions. We mustn't be mean, because He is there; we mustn't be angry, or vain; just as Aunt Polly says, 'be carefu', Miss; the meenester 'll see ye;' we must say 'be careful now, Mrs Heart, the Lord 'll see you.' I guess I'll get my best furniture out, and by next Sunday I'll learn to pay attention to the sermon."

"I think you have the right idea, Santy," said Ruth, and Santy wondered why there were tears in her eyes, and why her beautiful red lips quivered so, as she kissed her. She little knew how deeply the gentle heart felt this the sweet reward of her teaching.

CHAPTER XX.

THE WIDOW'S DOCTOR'S BILL.

"The soul on earth is an immortal guest,
Compelled to starve at an unreal feast;
A spark, which upward tends by nature's force,
A stream, divided from its parent source;
A deep, dis severed from the boundless sea,
A moment, parted from Eternity;
A pilgrim, panting for the rest to come,
An exile, anxious for his native home."

NOT long after this conversation, as Mr Eggleston sat in his study, writing out a brief descriptive lecture for the next Lyceum-meeting, Mistress Riggs ushered in Mrs Davis, as a "puir thing fra' the quarries."

The widow entered with an air of deep and profound reverence. Her attire was scrupulously neat, but oh ! so poor and faded, and patched, so almost sacred with that touching endeavour to be decent at whatever cost of time and labour. "Good-evening, Mrs Davis," said Mr Eggleston, heartily glad to see her, for he loved to have the humble members of his flock call upon him, and made them doubly welcome. "Mr Eggleston, I have been trying to find the doctor, but I can't," she said, as soon as she felt at ease. "I hope nobody is sick at your house?" said the minister. "Oh, no, thanks to heaven; we are all well, and my boy is going straight yet. I do think them new meetings of yours have saved him, for he's sober-thoughted now, and don't seem to care to go to the hall. But I wanted to see the doctor to give him the money we've been laying by, both Jake and I. I would have had it sooner, but the boy, being invited here to the sociables, wanted some new things to make him nice enough to see the ladies. I went to the place where the doctor stays, but they said his room was locked, so I thought I would leave the money with you."

"Did Doctor Wills send in his bill?" asked the minister, a little puzzled. "Oh, no, he never made out no bill, but once when I asked him how much would it be, he smiled and says he, 'not over fifty dollars, Mrs Davis.' Well, sir, that's cheap enough, for if he come once he come a hundred times to me and him, saying nothing of his being up with Jake a whole night, when the fever was on him. And I don't know, sir, when Jake and me has paid money with more real pleasure."

"But you must have worked for this money, Mrs Davis."

"Indeed, I have, sir, and with a will. We've lived small for a time, and I've took in some of the quarrymen's washing, and done a bit at the work myself. But I'm

quite hearty, sir ; it hasn't hurt me, and I'm only sorry I couldn't get it before."

"I expect Doctor Willis here every moment. He promised to bring me a book I wanted—and there's his chaise now. Don't mind me ; I'm busy writing ; just say to him what you please."

The doctor came in, smiling. Most people came into Mr Eggleston's study smiling, and though some went out with quiet, solemn faces, it was not because the visit had been an unhappy one. "Ah, Mrs Davis, glad to find you looking so well !" said the visitor, handing Mr Eggleston a large volume ; "I didn't expect to see you. You'll find the comments I spoke of on the marked pages, doctor, one on the Gulf-stream, the other on the peculiarities of West Indian vegetation,—most interesting volume ! I sat up half the night reading it, and you may have the benefit of my annotations," he added, laughing. He was holding his hat in his hand, his genial handsome face strongly marked by the flame of the study-lamp.

"I was wanting to speak to you, doctor," said Mrs Davis, timidly. "At your service, madam," said the doctor. "What can I do for you ?" he added, turning gracefully. "You must excuse me for being so long about it," the widow responded, taking from her pocket an old, much-worn wallet, "but you know poor folks like us can't always be as just or as generous as we like. So here's the fifty dollars, with my kindest thanks for your constant kindness to me and mine." He had made a deprecatory motion when the wallet was first produced. At the mention of the amount his hand fell to his side again.

"My dear madam," he said, and his voice indicated astonishment, "I never sent you in my bill !"

"That don't matter, sir ; you'll remember that I asked you once, and you said it wouldn't be over fifty dollars,—

little enough both Jake and I think, and willing enough we were to pay it. Jake's turned a new man, sir."

"But I won't take it!" said the doctor, the red coming into his forehead; "I can't take your hard earnings and savings. Why, Mrs Davis, I never meant to send you in any bill at all. What I said to you I said in sport. Fifty dollars from you? It's monstrous!"

"Indeed, sir, it's a very small sum; we never can pay you for your kindness in many ways, but for the time and medicine,—oh, sir, I shall feel poor indeed if you refuse that!"

"Half of it, then."

"No, sir!" said the widow firmly, "every cent of it. I can't take back the pleasure I've felt in earning it, and which I seem to pay out to you with it as a debt of gratitude like,"—and she held the money firmly forth. He took it; but a strange expression passed over his face; his finely-cut chin trembled, and he could scarcely command his voice to bid her good evening as she passed out. "What do you think of that, doctor?" he asked, as Mr Eggleston turned towards him. "I'll be hanged if I can keep that money; beg your pardon, doctor, but I must say something strong, or burst,—into tears, I mean. I couldn't insult her decent poverty by thrusting it back into the old wallet, as I'd half a mind to do. God bless her honest soul! Why, I knew that if ever she paid me she must work like a slave, for it would take all the boy's wages to make up for the time he lost by his illness. And did you see her dress! If she hasn't worn it since the time she saw her good husband lowered into the grave,—and that, she tells me, was sixteen years ago,—I miss my guess. Why, I warrant you she has gone without milk in her tea,—and perhaps she hasn't had any tea. I tell you what, doctor," he added, brushing his hands lightly

across his eyes, "such things go nearer to making me a Christian than some of your sermons do!"

"Amen!" said the minister heartily. "I don't care what makes you a Christian, and I think he added with quiet emphasis, "that one who visits the widow and the fatherless in their affliction, is pretty near the kingdom."

"I expect you'll find me floundering in your net sometime," said the doctor with comical pathos. "I suppose you'll take me by the gills without any mercy when I'm once fairly caught. But about this money; it burns my fingers. I'll tell you what, doctor, I've just 'thoct a thoct,' as your canny Scotch lady in the other part of the house says. Miss Ruth's always about, doing angel-deeds, and I'm going to give her this money, every cent of it, to make the good old widow comfortable the coming winter. Ruth being a woman, will know just how to do it. What do you say to that, doctor?"

"I say the offer does you credit," was the reply, "and I've no doubt Ruth will manage it so as not to touch her pride."

"You see it's just as well for her to imagine she has paid me; as she says she don't want to lose the pleasure of it, and if Miss Ruth will just keep this money till next Christmas, she'll have forgotten by that time this little conversation. And now I must be going."

"How is Mrs Warwick?" asked the minister.

"Well, it's a curious case altogether," was the reply; "the woman's health has been injured by some overstrain. She kept school, she tells me, and when you put a bundle of nerves into the chair of a large district school, unsupported by the ordinary quota of muscular energy, you twist those nerves into a hopeless shape. Mrs Warwick will never be a strong woman, and I am sorry to say that her mental health seems in an equally shattered state. There is a morbidness about her that I don't like, and I

expect it is caused by her husband's reckless conduct. I don't know what to make of Tom Warwick. He has one of the finest minds I ever met with. His stock of books would put some of our college-bred people to shame, and yet he is going about preaching doctrines calculated to set a better-ordered community by the ears. Upon my word, I think your net will be set to little purpose if you don't master him."

"Does he drink yet?"

"I suppose so, and I have reason to think that he opposes his wife shamefully. I'm astonished at the man, for I am sure he loves her devotedly, but that untrained devil's will of his might crush a stronger mind than hers. I pity her, for she is sadly broken down, and becoming morbid."

"What can be done?" queried the minister. "Tom has forbidden both my daughter and myself to call upon her. There's no use trying to reason with such a man, particularly while he is under the influence of strong drink."

"Which is pretty nearly all the time," said the doctor. "He has been studying Comte's Philosophy, lately, and is about 'daft,' as Aunt Polly would say, over Darwin's theory. His powerful but ill-balanced intellect swings on the pivot of every new doctrine, and discards the old; it's not a comfortable state for a man to be in, it strikes me, if my judgment is worth anything."

The doctor had unconsciously planted a thorn in the minister's heart as he left the room. Of what avail were these struggles, or, as the doctor had put it, what was the use of the net if Satan had set up his stronghold in the heart and life of this powerful man? Once or twice he had tried to reason with Tom, but he might as well have beaten against a rock whose stony roots struck fathoms deep into the soil beneath. Tom was always forging thunder-bolts at his own fire-side, and he held them ready

to launch at his opponents on every occasion. Singularly reticent at his work and even at his home, when he did speak at the hall, or with those who were at war with his opinions, he was sure to vanquish them, seemingly, with his war-like array of words and opinions. "It can't be done by argument," said the minister to himself, "but it can be done by God's power. I feel confident that the soul of that man will not be lost, but that he will sometime become a mighty ally in the cause of human redemption."

Mistress Riggs opened the door again. "Here's a man maun see you, meenester," she said, her countenance expressing the utmost horror of which her long-drawn features were capable. "It's that devil's eemisary himsel', an' I tauld him your time was na' to be taken oop wi' every strooler, speecially when——"

"Who is it, Polly?" asked the minister, a little impatiently.

"Sure an' it's that infeedle who they ca' Seelent Taum."

"Send him right in, Polly; never detain anybody in the hall who comes to see me," was the answer; and Polly, sure in her heart that the minister was "daft" in good earnest, retreated in a hurry, and presently the man of whom the minister had been talking and thinking, stood before him.

"Mr Warwick!" he exclaimed, rising.

"Tom, if you please, doctor; I'm not used to being mistered," said the man.

"Mister, if you please, Tom; I'm not used to being doctored," was the clergyman's retort.

Tom smiled. He rather liked to be paid back in his own coin. It was no weak, whining disciple who could master him, or even make him respect him. Perhaps if poor Gracie had possessed more vigour and spirit,

it would have been better for both. Tom could not comprehend ethereality, and set it down for cowardice.

"I called, *Mr Eggleston*, then," he said, placing one hand on the back of a chair set for him, "to bring a message from my wife. I have told you before my reasons for wishing her to be undisturbed by clerical or religious visitors. She is very weak on that point, and I'm afraid of insanity; her mind is evidently unhinged, but she is so extremely desirous of seeing you for some reason or another, that I have taken the doctor's advice, and concluded to ask you to call this once."

"I am really very unwilling to darken your doors, even once," said Mr Eggleston, studying the fine Roman front of the daring atheist, and taking the breadth of his stubborn, defiant nature. Of course the answer had its desired effect.

"Why not, sir?" asked Tom, a little taken aback by an answer so opposite to what he looked for. He expected the minister would have seized his hat and bowed submission to his order, for it was more like that than a request. "It was my wife's wish."

"Not yours?"

His eye fell.

"I can't say that it is."

"You extend your hatred of the Eternal God even to His servants," said the minister, sternly.

"That is too strong a word, sir; I respect you as a man, but I have unlimited contempt for the old woman's fables you call your religion."

"And I respect your wife, sir, as a Christian woman, but I also have an unlimited contempt for the miserable trash you have substituted in the place of religion that elevates, instead of degrading the human soul; and furthermore, I don't know but my contempt extends to

the man who can defile himself with such abominable doctrines. Now, sir, if you say so, I will go under protest, to see your wife."

Tom stood there frowning; the muscles of his firm mouth working rapidly. Evidently he was not quite sure whether he ought to admire the spirit that prompted the minister's reply, or to knock him down. It certainly stimulated the small veneration he had for clerical decision. If the minister had whined over him, or sunk into the bathos of sentiment, he would have felt safe to despise him more or less, but the pungency of retort was conducive to his outward respect, at least; there was nothing for him to fight against. Besides, there was no sentiment so challenged his admiration as pluck. The minister decidedly had the advantage of the atheist,—powerful in mind and body though the latter was, and he saw and felt it.

"Very well, sir; you go to my house then to visit my family under protest if you will. I wish you good-evening."

"Good-evening, Tom!" said the minister cordially, and stood there watching him out. Then he smiled, and then he sighed.

"A pitiless, hard nature, and not to be subdued by soft words either. God give me grace and wisdom sufficient to the task. I'll make that man respect religion in my person, if in no other way. Christ took the scourge into the temple, and used it; the hypocrites quailed before His mild but decided rebukes. Oh, for wisdom as well as love! this man's soul must be won to Christ. I feel as if, like one of the Crusaders of old, I had taken a vow to accomplish it. But the poor wife! God help and pity her. That wounded spirit needs the gentlest ministrations."

CHAPTER XXI.

THE DOCTOR'S CONFESSION.

"My Saviour, dare I come to Thee
Who let the little children come?
But I?—my soul is faint in me!
I come from wandering to and fro
This weary world."

MEANTIME various young people were assembled at the parsonage, and Mistress Riggs and Santy were helping them off with hats and shawls in Ruth's pleasant bedroom. The girls were all afraid of Aunt Polly, whose stern eyes seemed at once to notice all the deficiencies of their wardrobe, for they were nearly all poor and by no means fashionably attired.

Then they went down stairs in groups to the large, plainly-furnished parlour, and met Ruth standing on the threshold. Each face brightened as the warm pressure of her hand told of her welcome. For all, she had some pleasant little greeting. "How is your mother, Eunice?" she asked one sad-eyed girl, whose face seemed never to have worn the bloom of youth. "Better, Miss Ruth; she says your visit did her good. But father is still going on."

"Going on," meant drinking, bringing terror and want to the poor little household. "I'm very sorry for you, Eunice; we must think of something that will save him."

"I don't know what I should do if it wasn't for the thought of coming here," said Eunice in a low voice; "it seems to hearten me for all the week."

"I am glad to see you, Jacob." This to a large, good-looking but awkward young man, the hopeful son of widow Davis. "I was to ask you if Miss Santy's mother's name's Rogers?" asked Jacob, running his heavy red fingers

through a shock of curling hair. "Miss Santy's mother?" interrogated Ruth, smiling. "Yes'm, mother says she knew a woman 'twas a Rogers, and had bin a Grue, she didn't know but 'twas Miss Santy's mother; told me to ask."

"I'll speak to Santy about it," said Ruth, and Jacob dispensed his small attentions in another part of the room.

When all the company had arrived, Ruth did her utmost to entertain them. Books and pictures were placed at their disposal, music followed recitations. At a later hour the minister came in just as Aunt Polly was handing cakes around to the expectant groups.

"I don't see the releegion o' cakes an' lemoneed," muttered Mistress Riggs, "but Miss Rooth takes queer ways to bring folk into the keengdom. Times is changed sin' I was yoong; it was na' thocht proper then to hae sic' gaitherins. Wull ye hae any more cakes, Miss?" and she went out, still muttering that they were "a ragged set, an' she wasn't sure but Miss Rooth was lawerin' hersel' to keep company wi' sich."

Ruth took advantage of a moment's leisure and went to her father's side. "How did you find Gracie?" she asked. "Very weak and wavering," was the reply. "Under the influence of Tom's stronger will, she seems fearful of losing her hold upon faith. Tom has taken to reading to her now, and she is forced to hear arguments, and listen to authors utterly repugnant to her."

"Do you think it is possible for him to succeed?" asked Ruth.—"Not if she clings to the cross," was his reply.

"Was she ill in bed?"

"Oh, no! but ethereal-looking as a snow-wreath. She appeals powerfully to one's Christian sympathies, poor child!"

"I should so like to see her."

"She wishes you to come, but I think it best for us both to stay away, while her husband is so hostile."

"Was he there to-night?"

"Oh no! at the hall. Our little parties here, coupled with the Lyceum, tell powerfully upon their audiences, and that is what ails Tom. He is very angry at our success."

Later, the doctor came in, according to promise. "What am I down for on your programme?" he asked of Ruth.

"Recitation, reading, or song,—which you please," she answered. He shrugged his shoulders. "I'm not good at either,—but,—you didn't know I'd taken to reading the Bible lately."

"I hoped everybody read the Bible," was Ruth's reply.

He looked down. "It has been a sealed book to me," he said, thoughtfully. "I have been handled rather roughly in my earlier years, my mother dying while I was a mere lad, and since then I have quaffed but sparingly of the milk of human kindness."

"But you are very kind to others," Ruth said.

"That's a constitutional weakness with me," he responded with his old, merry smile; "besides, one can't see so much wretchedness without growing either more tender of human life, or hardened to all its suffering. But I was going to tell you,—I have been rather sceptical ever since I can remember. I wanted a faith, but the apples of earth were very alluring. In short, the devil tempted me, and I did eat. I have lately been listening to your father's sermons with new interest. To-night I will give you my confession of faith, veiled in a recitation."

Ruth's eyes shone with pleasure.

"Last evening," he went on to say, "I sat in the open air, and all nature was so beautiful that I got thinking in a strain unusual with me. All the western sky was filled with scintillating gleams of jewels,—burning red, blazing amber, pale but magnificent greens and purples; the heavens rained down their splen-

dour. I never felt so small in my life. What had I done to deserve the joy which this affluence of nature awoke in my bosom? I really could think of nothing. I seemed to have lived wholly for myself. Some few good deeds,—but pshaw! I won't mention them. After it was quite dark I went into the house and hunted up a Testament. 'Oh, yes, I have one; it was my mother's. By the way, what histories might be told of these mother's Testaments? I have seen them lying on the pillows of poor hospital-patients,—taken them up, sure to read some sweet name on the fly-leaf,—some 'Mary' or 'Martha.' 'Your Testament?' I asked. 'My mother's gift, sir,' and I assure you there came an angel-light into the worn face of some, while others could hardly speak the name for tears. My mother's Testament was put into my hand by fingers already cold with the death-damp, and the last words she said were, 'May God make it the instrument of your salvation!' Well, as I was saying, I sat down to read it, and opened at the chapter which, if you will allow me, I will repeat here to-night,—a part of it, at least. You, as the lawyers say, will draw your own conclusions."

Ruth listened with some astonishment to this utterly unexpected history. Doctor Willis, she knew, possessed remarkable gifts of elocution. His voice was low, rich, and perfectly modulated. Let him read what he would, poem or prose, serious or comic, he invested it with a charm that was all but inimitable. Ruth listened eagerly, with a beating heart. The announcement that Doctor Willis was going to read, produced a sudden silence. Presently he took a paper from his pocket, and began in low, clear, sweet tones:—

“ ‘Whosoever believeth
That Jesus is the Christ,
Is born of God.

And every one
That loveth Him that begat,
Loveth Him also
That is begotten of Him.
By this we know that we love
The children of God,
When *we* love God,
And keep His commandments.
For this is the love of God,
That we keep His commandments ;
And His commandments
Are not grievous.
For whatsoever is born of God,
Overcometh the world !
And this is the victory
That overcometh the world,
Even our faith !
Who is he that overcometh the world,
But he that believeth
That Jesus is the Son of God ?
This is He that came by water and blood,
Even Jesus Christ.
Not by water, only,
But by water and blood.
And it is the Spirit
That beareth witness,
Because the Spirit is truth.
For there are three
That bear record in heaven ;
The Father, the Word, and the Holy Ghost,
And these three are one.
And there are three
That bear witness in earth,
The spirit, and the water, and the blood,
And these three agree in one.
If we receive the witness of men,
The witness of God is greater !
For this is the witness of God,
Which he hath testified of His Son.
He that believeth on the Son of God
Hath the witness in Himself.
He that believeth not God,

*Hath made Him a liar!
Because he believeth not the record
That God gave of His Son.
And this is the record
That God hath given to us,
Eternal Life!
And this life is in His Son.
He that hath the Son, hath Life.
And he that hath not the Son of God
Hath not Life.'"*

"Twelve verses of the fifth chapter of 1 John," concluded the doctor. "I believe Bible-readings are always in place." Mr Eggleston came forward quietly, and looked the doctor straight in the face. And the doctor looked at him without flinching.

"This means something," said the minister.

"It means everything—to me," replied the doctor, with much emotion. "I was looking out in the dark when I began to read it, and first one star appeared, then another, and finally the whole heavens were studded with them. I may be but a starlight Christian, unable, like some with more eagle-like vision, to see the sun. But what faith I have is very precious to me. I have found what I think I have always been groping for; and I may thank you and your sweet daughter, under God, for the preciousness of the new life that is opening before me."

"But you said nothing of it to-night in the study."

"No, I had a curious feeling about it; the fact is, I have made so many jokes about the net—and—finding myself caught—"

"I understand, perfectly," said the minister, with an unusual smile at the doctor's apparent confusion. He shook his hand, with a murmured "thank God!" and presently the little party broke up.

CHAPTER XXII.

A VISIT TO MRS DAVIS.

“Sweet is the image of the brooding dove,
 Holy as heaven a mother's tender love,
 The love of many prayers and many tears,
 Which changes not with dim, declining years,
 The only love which, on this teeming earth
 Asks no return for passion's wayward birth.”

“WE’LL go and see all about it, Santy,—that is, we’ll go and call on Mrs Davis, and find out what she knows about your mother,—if it should be she.”

“Don’t you think it *must* be?” asked Santy, getting hat and mantle with alacrity. “Oh, dear Miss Ruth! if I could only see my mother again, and that dear little sister that loved me so! It would be so nice; and if they are poor, why I could take them all to live with me.”

“What was your father’s business?” asked Ruth, as the two moved over the familiar road to the quarry.

“I’m sure I don’t know,” said Santy, pausing; “I wonder what he *did* do? He used to have a great many papers,—a whole pocket-book full,—but I don’t know. It didn’t bring him in much money, for we were always very poor. I used to look out of my window at Stoneyhedge, and think if they all only lived in one of those little houses, and I could see them sometimes! I’ll have Stoneyhedge fixed up just for them.”

Mrs Davis was at home, ironing. Her little place was neat and cool, having doors open both north and south. Mingled sounds of mighty hammers, of whistling, singing, stamping, loading, came to their hearing, as the two visitors seated themselves. Blue sky, brown masses of rock, green grass, and the gardens in the distance, just

showing their wealth of foliage, made the picture that met their eyes, one well worth the seeing. "We have come to hear something of the lady whose name was Rogers," said Ruth. Mrs Davis set down her iron. "Well, of all things!" she exclaimed, the red rushing into her cheek, "now I do see a likeness, why, of course I do; and there was too little sisters."

"Oh, I only had one," said Santy, with a disappointed look; "it couldn't have been my mother."

"Yes, it could," said Ruth; "another little girl might have been born after you went away."

"Oh, yes;" and Santy clapped her hands. "What was the oldest girl's name, if you please?"

"What! little Nelly you mean?"

"Oh! it is her!" cried Santy in a rapture of fervour. "Tell me all about it; where is my mother? I must have her here, directly; she shall have enough to eat, and money enough, too,—father and all, though he never was very kind to me. Were they suffering very much?"

"Suffering!" repeated Mrs Davis, with a blank look.

"Yes, poor,—very poor?"

"Poor! Well, if living in a splendid four-storey house with plenty of servants and everything, is suffering, then they suffered. Why, I never saw such dresses, and then they rode in their carriage." Santy looked at Ruth.

"It can't be them, after all; I knew I should be disappointed," and she seemed ready to burst into tears. "What business did the Mr Rogers you knew, follow?"

"Mr Rogers was dead, Miss, but he made a fortune, I've heard, very suddenly in the oil-wells in Pennsylvania, the year or two before he died."

"Where did you know them?" asked Ruth.

"In Philadelphia, Miss; I was nurse to the littlest Miss Rogers; oh, dear! there was nothing but what they had."

Santy turned quite pale.

"Rich, and never thought of me," she murmured, all her pretty castles vanishing in thin air. "And I can't help them, and I was so happy thinking." Her lip trembled.

"Never mind, Santy, there may be some good reason why they did not seek you out," said Ruth, encouragingly; "you know you have dear friends here. We will write to Philadelphia."—"Was your mother's name Sarah, Miss?"

"Yes, yes, that is my name; I was called after her. But didn't she ever talk about me? never speak of Santy?"

"No, Miss, not that I remember; and it seems to me, too, that once little Miss Nell did say something about her sister going off. I was there for a long time while my Jake was a lanky boy, and they always treated me well."

"Do you know where they lived?" asked Ruth.

"Yes, Miss; I've got a card I'll give you." She went into the next room and returned with a soiled square of pasteboard. "I've always kept it, Miss, thinking I'd maybe like to hear some'at about her."

"Did Nelly go to school?"

"Bless you, no, Miss. She was delicate, and had somebody in the house all the time to teach her. The prettiest little creeter I ever saw in all my life, Miss."

"Oh, how I should love her!" exclaimed Santy, fervently. "Miss Ruth, wouldn't it be beautiful! But then, they've never cared for me," and a mournfulness overspread her face, "never even sent to me where I was."

"Did they know where you were?"

"I don't know; I suppose so."

"You must remember that your uncle took you under certain conditions. It may be your mother pledged herself not to seek you out,—to give you to him."

"Perhaps so; but I think it dreadful," sighed Santy.

"She did it for your good. You say she was poor."

"Oh, yes, very."

"And your stepfather was unkind to you."

"Yes; he seemed to hate me."

"Then probably it was her great anxiety that you might not be well treated, and grow up in ignorance that prompted her. Try to think the best of it, Santy."

But Santy was disappointed, and Ruth was beginning to see that she did not bear disappointment very well. Perhaps it was because of her sunless experience at Stony-hedge; it had coloured her life somewhat, and deepened impressions. Santy made Mrs Davis tell all she knew of the family, how her mother looked, what she wore,—about the house and furniture,—the walks, the drives, the ordinary goings on from day to day, till the poor woman had quite exhausted her knowledge about them.

"I'll write as soon as we get home, Santy, and you can add a few lines now, I think."

"Do I write well enough?" Santy asked anxiously. "Because I expect, though Nelly is younger than I am, she's a finer scholar. And it all seems so strange," she added, after a pause, "that I've got a mother at all, and two little sisters. Couldn't I go on there? is it very far?"

"We'll wait and get an answer to our letter," said Ruth soothingly. The letter was written and posted that night, but Santy was very uneasy. The next day and the next she could not fix her attention upon her studies, and was continually talking of her mother and her sisters.

A week passed by and Santy, who had haunted the Post-Office, brought home a letter triumphantly. "I wouldn't open it till you had seen it," she said; "I was afraid."

"What of, pray?" asked Ruth.

"I don't know," Santy answered, eagerly watching the prospect of disenveloping the letter.

"It is not just what you expected, maybe," said Ruth; "now see how well you can bear it; it is not from your mother at all."

"Oh!" said Santy, her face elongating; "I don't care."

She threw herself into a seat with an attempt at nonchalance which was at once so desperate and so pathetic that Ruth could not forbear a smile.

The letter proved to be from a Miss Long, who professed to be installed as Mrs Rogers' housekeeper, and was authorized, she said, to open and answer, or forward letters. Mrs Rogers, she stated, had been abroad for more than a year, having gone in company with some friends, for the benefit of her little daughter's health. The youngest child, she added, had died a few months before the family had left Philadelphia. She further said that she should forward the letter or write herself, to apprise Mrs Rogers that her daughter had made inquiries for her, and that as soon as possible it was likely we should hear from her. "So you see," said Ruth, when she had finished the letter, "your mother knows nothing about your uncle's death, for she was away when he died; so you cannot blame her, dear, for making no effort to see you."

"No," said Santy, disconsolately; "I wonder when she will come back?"—"Miss Long does not say; are you getting tired of us, Santy?"—"Tired of you? oh, Miss Ruth, how can you say that?" exclaimed the girl with sudden vivacity. "I, tired of *you*! Never—but—" all the years of her isolation suddenly sweeping over her memory, with their dreary accompaniments, "I *should* like to see my mother. I was *so* proud and fond of my little sister. There's a great deal of disappointment in this world, isn't there, Miss Ruth?" Poor Ruth—none knew better than she as she answered, "A great deal, dear, but we can bear it all if we ask Christ to help us."

CHAPTER XXIII.

LATIN AND GREEK.

“The mind of man is vastly like a hive,
 His thoughts so busy ever—all alive.
 But here the simile will go no further,
 For bees are making honey, one and all,
 Man's thoughts are busy in producing gall,
 Committing daily, as it were, self-murder.”

THE little shaded astral lamp burned softly in Gracie Warwick's neat parlour. The curtains were drawn, and without could be heard the plashing of the rain upon the windows—the swift, fierce voice of the north wind. It was an autumn storm, and now and then the subdued voice of the thunder rolling in the far distance, the faint gleam of the lightning told that summer gave up her reign with reluctance. Gracie sat in her own low, easy rocking-chair. Her sweet face showed no signs of colour. The brown eyes were fastened upon the face of her husband, who sat at the little table, book in hand, a tender light in their irises. She looked more like a child than ever, sweeter, fairer, purer, but sometimes an expression of profound sadness crossed her sweet face. Tom looked up and unwittingly caught her glance, so full of pathetic scorn. “You're tired of my reading,” he said bluntly.

She put her hand to her temples, and sighed.

“I believe I am, Tom ; those things interest you, but they sound to me like tinkling brass. You know I must speak out once in a while, Tom—and—and I *can't* be convinced.”

“This is nonsense,” he cried, his face flushing. “If you can't be interested in such reading as that, there is no appreciation in you.”

“Don't let us renew the old argument, Tom ; I'm tired

of it. Let me say what I will, when you question me, and go on with your readings if it gives you pleasure."

"How the dence can it give me pleasure, when I know that you are protesting all the time, and not even trying to understand?"

"But I do try to understand, Tom; it's not my fault if your books are beyond me."

"Beyond you! why it's as simple as A, B, C; I suppose it would be all right if I could read the Bible to you day after day."—"I'd rather hear anything than such awful sentiments as you have been reading this evening, that the desire for personal immortality is factitious, a drunken longing; that the idea of it is an enemy, mischievous to our intelligence and peace."

"So it is. I can prove it in a very simple manner. You have a hope of immortality as you call it, and look at you. Nervous, low-spirited, sad and sick from one week to another. I wish to my soul you had never seen the inside of a psalm-book, Bible, or church. If I had my way, I'd drive every canting sniveller out of the land," he added fiercely, with another harsh word, rising and striding to and fro. Gracie was silent for a moment. The humbled spirit within her craved an opportunity to speak, to defend herself, her faith, and her church, and at last, with a low, wailing cry she exclaimed, "It is not the religion, it is you, Tom, who are killing me." He paused a moment, looking down upon her. "Me!" he exclaimed with vehemence, "because I want to give you a larger liberty and a freer life, to drag you away from the blinding, slavish dogmas that are sufficient to crush out every beautiful thing in nature from that harsh, denunciatory, miserable Book, the fag ends of cursed history—"

"Stop, Tom!" said Gracie, her face alight with new energy and a new determination. "I won't hear you say such things about the Book of God. I believe it; I know it is the most ancient record extant. All

Roman literature is modern, in comparison with it, so is Grecian. Even the father of profane history, Herodotus, came a thousand years after Moses, and Sallust, five hundred later."

Tom paused, a curiously perplexed expression changing his strongly-marked features. "Herodotus! Sallust!" He looked at her, amazed. "Why, the words fall as glibly from your tongue as though you had read them both."

"As I happen to have done," said the little woman. She stopped a moment to gather up her courage.

"Tom, it is not religion that is wearing me out,—it is,—how shall I tell you?—it's because I have kept certain things secret, which you should have known."

He looked at her still, with that strange glance, and again she faltered. The wind drove the heavy, pelting drops against the window, but to Gracie the atmosphere seemed stifling. She will never forget how the little clock on the mantle seemed ticking against her brain; how the wild sough of the wind made her shudder as if it smote upon her heart. "Well," said Tom in a cold voice, "what more have you to say? I am listening."

"Oh, Tom, don't look so!" shivered Gracie, striving hard to gather up her failing energies. "I was only going to add that while you supposed I owed all my graces, as you are pleased to say, to nature, I have been well educated by an aunt some time since dead. Latin and even Greek are familiar to me; so are most of the books you consider so wonderful. I am a fair French scholar, for my aunt was an accomplished linguist. I was brought up in affluence till my nineteenth year; after she died I kept school, and so injured my health."

By this time her self-appointed task had deprived her of the small remnant of strength she had gathered for the purpose, and she sank back in her chair. Tom's face underwent curious changes while she recited the list of her accomplishments.

“Latin, Greek, Italian, Spanish, Ancient History,—why, in the name of ten thousand worlds, did you marry a poor devil of a quarryman with no education and no social standing? Gracie, you have deceived me; I never will forgive you!” he exclaimed passionately.

“Tom, you don’t mean it,” she said faintly.

For answer he only gave his head a shake, gathered his books together, whistling softly all the while, placed them on their shelves, took his hat and left the house. Gracie watched him, and when the door shut behind him, it seemed for a moment as if the light of her life had gone out. “Will he never be persuaded?” she cried, “though one rose from the dead?”

“And yet,” she murmured presently, “I foresaw it. Henceforth there is a harder cross for me to carry, and I deserve all the humiliation I receive; I have been acting with duplicity, even after accepting the grace of Christ; I have deferred doing my duty, and am perhaps to be beaten with many stripes.”

Strange to say, as she sat there in that silent room, conscious that her husband had gone from her society to that of the tap-room; had chosen to leave a Christian wife and consort with infidels and atheists, even then the sweet peace which comes when duty is fulfilled, crept into her heart, and thrilled it with unwonted joy. Weak, suffering, misunderstood, perhaps unloved, though she may be, her soul seemed to empty itself of all its cares and crosses, and lean wholly on Jesus. In the quiet of that humble place, broken only by the still-driving storm, a divine presence stood by her, and she almost heard the words, “IT IS I! BE NOT AFRAID!”

A new strength entered the delicate frame; she seemed to recognize God’s inexpressible patience, as well as His goodness in the fulfilment of His promises; birds sang in the boughs of her faith.

“If I can have this sweet presence always,” she mur-

mured, "it is enough." And now a wild, strong hope sprang up in her heart for Tom. He must see that it was quite useless to undermine the foundations of her faith. Reproaches she expected, and she thought deserved; but now that the secret that had burdened her soul was rolled away, she knew that she should be happier herself, and make him happier if he would only let her minister to him. Her face, rapt and more beautiful than ever, was a study, as she left her seat, not now with weary, dejected motions, but with quick, almost elastic steps. Bringing pen and paper to the table she sat down and wrote a short, touching, tender letter to Tom, in which she related her history, her reasons for concealment, and her deep contrition that she had been so weak, and untrustful. Then lifting down a favourite book from her own little treasury, one of the books that Tom sneered at, she copied the following pages to fold within her letter:—

Christianity, or Atheism? which?

The Bible, or no revelation at all? Our God, or no God? Our Saviour, or no Saviour? Our religion, or no religion? How will you decide it? Come! this is no time for indecision. On which side will you take your stand?

Will you reject the Gospel as unworthy of your acceptance?

Will you surrender your interest in all its connections with the past, the present and the future?

Will you give up its God as a phantom? its Saviour as a myth? its heaven as a dream? Is your soul but a breath of air?

Will you content yourself to say in your dying hour, *I have no hope of ever seeing again any who have gone before me, or any I may leave behind me? I am just about to drop into the nothingness from which I so mysteriously came?*

Are you ready for all this? If so, on what warrant? Do you think it can be trusted? Are you sure it ought to be trusted?

Is it the verdict of the wisest and best of our race?

How came you from nothing?

Are you *sure* there is not a God?

And if God made you the something you were before you were born, and has made you the noble something you have become

since that beginning, are you sure that He did not design, that He does not even yet desire that you may become something infinitely nobler still?

If you admit His existence at all you cannot deny His power. Why then distrust His love?

Behold what He has done for your natural life.

What a world He has given for your habitation! What continents to nourish you! What oceans to refresh you! What skies to inspire you! What a sun to glorify your days! What a moon to relieve your nights! What a magnificent expanse of multitudinous stars to enlarge your thoughts and command your admiration! And what society He has given you! What friends to cheer you! What a galaxy of glittering incitements in the splendid civilization around you, to elevate your aims and refine your pursuits! What arts to adorn you! What sciences to enrich you! What a literature to instruct you! What a government to protect you!

And what now? What is the meaning of this *natural* life if there be no spiritual life,—if there be no eternal life?

If wrong exist,—and who can deny it? if wrong be sin,—and who can deny it? if sin bring ruin,—and who *dare* deny it? then why should not God, who has magnified His *power* by strewing immensity with suns and systems, illustrate His love by sending Jesus Christ into the world to save sinners?

“I will leave no means untried,” she said, softly, “though he may never read it, though he may treat all my efforts with utter indifference. I think in his heart he believes in religion, but he dislikes it because its principles are not in unison with his perverted reason.”

The door opened; Tom had returned.

CHAPTER XXIV.

DESOLATE.

"Thou sparkling bowl! thou sparkling bowl!
 Though lips of bard thy brim may press,
 And eyes of beauty o'er thee roll,
 And song and dance thy power confess,
 I will not touch thee, for there clings
 A scorpion to thy side that stings."

THE man seemed changed. His pure expressive eye was all blood-shot. Gracie saw in a moment that he had been drinking heavily. He came in dogged, silent, dangerous. Now indeed did his wife need wisdom. For a moment her heart sank, and the cry went up, "What shall I do?" Then she sank down into her chair, and passively waited for the storm to burst. It came, for it had been gathering during all Tom's walk home. In a furious, resistless, torrent he poured out the vials of his drunken wrath, accused her of deception, of hypocrisy, of being a canting and perverse religionist,—saying many things that his tongue, sober, would have abhorred. It seemed to Gracie as if the acmé of her trials had indeed come. Suppose this man whose wretched, atheistical tendencies had driven him so far to ruin, should lay violent hands upon her? Suppose he should kill her? She grew cold from head to foot at the thought, but all the more she clung to that invisible presence; all the more she held tired hands and aching heart out towards the Being who had promised to be near in time of trouble. He saw the letter which she had written with such loving tenderness, and with a half-insane laugh tore it into shreds. He caught sight of the little Bible which was at times Gracie's only solace, and clutched at it with trembling fingers. "Don't tear it, Tom," cried

Gracie, rising up, white as a snow-wreath; "don't harm it; it was my mother's dying gift. It is all I have."

Vain effort; with an imprecation he jerked the volume out of her reach, and, leaf by leaf, ending with the cover, he rent it with many a curse, till it lay like so many torn and shivering doves fluttering all over the red carpet—a shattered vase of precious ointment—God's pearls crushed under the foot of Giant Unbelief. Gracie could not repress the cry of horror that leaped from her tongue as she stood there with parted lips and glittering eyes. She could hardly believe the evidence of her senses, so tenderly had she cherished this only keepsake that had been placed in her hands by the chill fingers that had now been dust so long. It was a desecration that she seemed for that moment unable to forgive.

"Now *that* cursed thing is gone!" said the man, glaring at the fragments; "it was like a ghost in the house, always haunting me. It was my rival; I won't have rivals; I want my wife to think as I think; to hate ministers and churches, and the old *effete* worship that disgraces this nineteenth century. I won't have prayers, and mumblings, and incantations where I am. I want to be understood." Here he pointed his long forefinger towards Gracie. "Either you go with me; you renounce this nonsense that has made my life a curse, or you are no wife of mine. Is that plain language enough for you? Can I speak better English? Do you understand me?"

"Oh, Tom!" moaned Gracie.

"Now don't snivel. According to your confession to-night, you're far beyond me; unfit any way to be the wife of a labouring man."

"Tom, don't say that; you know how I look up to you, how I reverence you, when you're yourself; you're not yourself to-night, Tom."

"Don't interrupt me; you ought to know better than that;" and his speech was now getting thick. "I'll say

over again what I said just now, or in terms that can't be misunderstood; I ask you, will you renounce your religion for me, or renounce me for your religion?"

"Tom, that is very hard!" said poor, trembling Gracie. "You are asking too much."

"How often am I to repeat it?"

"My dear husband—"

"Keep off,—give me your answer."

"Tom, I *can't* renounce my religion, God helping me; now do your worst!"

"You've signed your death-warrant, little woman!" said the man, more quietly; "go and put on your bonnet and shawl."

"What for, Tom?"

"Obey me!" For one moment Gracie stood erect; the next, there came some sweet Scripture-promise to her soul, and she resolved in the strength of Christ to be firm, and bear all things. She went into her own room and came out, presently, bonnetted and shawled.

"Where are you going, Tom?" she ventured to ask.

"We are going nowhere; you are going from me."

"No, Tom,—you don't mean—"

"Go!" he added, pointing to the door.

"You won't oblige me to leave the house alone, Tom? only hear how it rains."

"Go, I say!"

"Tom, dear Tom!" and her voice was hollow with terror; "go where you will with me, but,—this fearful night,—don't send me out, shelterless! Where shall I go?"

"To your minister,—anywhere,—for all I care!" he said, crazy with passion and poison.

"Oh, Tom, you wouldn't send me away! you wouldn't disgrace me in the eyes of the neighbours—"

"What do I care for the neighbours, or the devil?" He set the door wide open,—then turned upon her.

"Don't put me out!" she cried wildly, as he came,

and shuddering, she fled from the room, then forth into the street, into the pitiless storm, drawing the door to, silently, behind her. "Was this one of the fruits of her faith in Christianity? If so it was very, very bitter! No,"—the thought came to her—"no, no! it is the fruit of *infidelity*,—of Atheism,—of all the abominable affiliation of that soul-debasing error. Christ pities me; Christ sustains me; He who knew not where to lay His head. Dear Jesus! I am houseless and homeless, for THY dear sake. Oh, find me a shelter!"

The wind swept by her remorselessly, the rain drove in her face with no more mercy than it had driven against the window-pane that felt it not. She wrapped her shawl closer, gave one glance back at the little parlour windows, and then crept thither to look in for a moment, troubled with the dreary thought that he might set the house on fire. Through the parting in the curtains she saw him sitting in an utterly hopeless attitude, in her own arm-chair, his face buried in his hands. Her heart gave one throb of hope; he was coming to himself; he would certainly repent; he would call her back to him out of the storm. The slow moments passed, but he did not stir save to throw his head back with the manner of a weary man, and Gracie, sighing bitterly as she felt her factitious strength deserting her, turned away from the door she dared not enter. More dreadful than anything else was the thought that the neighbours might hear or see something amiss, and even in this crisis Tom's good name was precious to her. Hitherto he had not been positively cruel, only cutting, sarcastic, almost abusive with his tongue,—but that she could have borne. Slowly she left the little gate, slowly and timidly moved along, the hot tears falling and mingling with the rain-drops that wet her cheek, past the homes where she saw the careless but contented groups enjoying the rude comforts they had called about them, past the tinkling of Jessie

Reeves' poor little piano, out into the road, whose broad plank led to the principal street of the pleasant town.

"What shall I do? where shall I go?" she queried in an agony of terror, a half-childish dread of the dark and the loneliness making her a coward in spite of herself. Where could she go, indeed, but to the parsonage? She had no intimate friend. Ruth came nearest to that need of her heart, but how could she meet the minister, or the cold scorn of Mistress Riggs, who would be sure to draw her own conclusions as to the cause of this untimely visit?

As she stood there, undecided, the darkness seeming to close about her like a wall, the rain driving more fiercely than ever, as if with a spiteful consciousness of her desolation, the wind tightening her wet garments about her, she felt for a moment utterly hopeless. Her husband her enemy, herself in her weak and precarious state of health driven out into one of the worst storms of the season, her precious little Bible in fragments, torn by a madman's hand. No wonder the sobs came thick and fast, almost choking her as she pressed forward, and yet she could find only pity in her woman's heart for the man who had so basely forgotten his vows, saying repeatedly, "It was not he, but the demon within him." Fortunately she met nobody in her dreary walk, but arriving at the parsonage, her courage failed her. She could not present herself at the door on any pretext, and there was no possible way of attracting Ruth's attention. Perhaps she might have to stay out in the cold wet grounds all night. Nerved almost to desperation, she moved cautiously from the gate and went round to the bay-window, where a sight of such sweet repose, such utter content and softened beauty met her vision that she pressed her hands over her heart to keep back the sobs that almost rent her bosom.

The minister sat near his study-table, reading aloud. Ruth was on the right of the window, her little basket-stand running over with bright, warm wools of every

brilliant hue, from among which she was choosing some colour, lifting now a skein of scarlet and now one of white, while Santy was busy with her pencils and drawing-paper, basking at the same time in the heat of the newly-kindled coal-fire that shone in the pleasant rooms.

“Oh, Ruth, Ruth!” she sighed, “your home is Paradise, because the dear Lord dwells with every one of you. Oh, how shall I bear this desolation? I cannot tell them all how Tom has treated me, I cannot.”

She crept back to the porch where she was partly sheltered from the rain and wind, and sat down on the door step, ready to fly, like a scared bird, at the first foot-step. She had wiped her tears away, and a strange apathy stole over her as she watched the flickering lights within reflect themselves on dripping bush and twig, and on the soaked and sodden ground beneath. Suddenly a clock struck,—the old-fashioned clock in the hall, at the foot of the stairs, just within a few feet of where she sat, and she counted ten. Then she knew that the work was folded away, and listening, heard the clear tones of the minister’s voice in the prayer with which he closed the labours of the day. Chilled to the heart she lifted herself from her lowly seat; it might chance that Mrs Riggs, who boasted of preternatural power of sight and hearing, might come to the door to look about her, and she would not, she thought, be seen by her for worlds. She crept tremblingly down the steps, and round on the still sheltered walk to watch for a light in Ruth’s bedroom. It seemed to her that she could not bear the storm and the gloom much longer. Her clothes were wet almost to the skin; but notwithstanding that, her hands felt hot, and the fever at her heart was such that it diffused an unnatural warmth over her temples that kept her feeling as acutely as she might the terrible chill of the night. It seemed hours that she stood there, leaning against the wall till the house was still, and a light that struck across the paling told that Ruth had gone upstairs.

Yet longer she waited, until nerved by the possible danger of her situation, she went carefully down the walk, broke off a twig from a syringa bush, weighted it by wrapping about it an old envelope she had in her pocket, and threw it with all her force against one of the panes of the nearest window. Perhaps they had not heard it; yes, Santy came to the window and gazed out into the darkness; then Ruth gently pushed her aside, and listened as a wailing voice floated up on the wet wind, "Oh, Ruth, Ruth, I am here!"

"Who is it?" queried Ruth, in a low whisper.

"I, Gracie,—Mrs Warwick. Can I possibly come to your room without being seen? nobody must know but yourself."

"Yes!" said Ruth, decidedly, and shut the window softly.

Gracie went round to the porch again, and stood there almost ready to sink with contending emotions, gazing at the glass light at each side of the door for the first indication that Ruth was coming. Then the bolt slid, while all was still dark, and presently the door was opened.

"Take my hand, said Ruth in a whisper, "and come as quietly as possible." The bolt was again shot softly into its place, but Gracie was inside, trembling now with cold. She followed Ruth, and as they entered the room where Santy stood wondering in her night-dress, she sank half-fainting upon the nearest chair. "You are quite safe," said Ruth; "don't speak; keep as quiet as you can till you feel better." Then she lighted a fire, and put water on to heat. Silently and quickly she divested Gracie of her wet garments, and substituted dry ones in their stead—and not till the latter was seated, and quite comfortable, though deadly pale by the fire, would Ruth allow her to tell her story. "You did right to come here, though I am sorry you stayed out in the rain. And now let us hope for the best. I am sure your husband will never forgive himself for this night's work. You shall sleep with me, and to-morrow you will take papa into your confidence, and then he will advise you what to do." Gracie shook her head,

"He must never know it, dear Ruth," she said. "I cannot consent to expose poor Tom's conduct to any one but you, and I am sure Santy will respect my secret."

"I won't breathe a word," said Santy, who was enjoying this break upon the usual quiet of her experience, with the zest of one ignorant of actual sorrow, hugging her pillow as she spoke, and delighted at the unusual warmth of the room. "But you certainly cannot live this way, dear." Gracie wiped a few tears from her eyes.

"It is very hard," she said, "but Tom is my husband, and a good and kind one, too, except when he forgets himself in drink. I am sure his naturally noble self will be so ashamed to-morrow, that there is no telling what may be built on the foundation of his self-accusation. He don't know what he is about when he treats me unkindly,—and this is the first time that I have ever seen anything like violence in his conduct. Yes, I must go home to-morrow early, before my little maid comes; before the people about are up. I only want to rest awhile; Tom will be sorry, oh! so sorry! I hope I may save him through his mortification and shame."

"You shall do just as you please," said Ruth, kissing her, "only I'm afraid you will be sick."

"Then Tom must take care of me," Gracie responded, with a weary smile. "I believe he would be very glad to, poor fellow!" A moment after she looked up, wan and pallid. "I think I should be willing to give my life up, if Tom would become a Christian," she said softly.

"God may not require the sacrifice," Ruth responded, inexpressibly touched by her manner. Let us hope some other way may be found as acceptable. And now you must go to bed. Aunt Polly is up always at half-past five; I don't think she varies two seconds through the year, so you must leave us if possible a little before five, when it will be quite light and pleasant. I will wake you in time, so don't fear to sleep."

CHAPTER XXV.

FORGIVEN.

“The narrow soul
 Knows not the God-like glory of forgiving,
 Nor can the cold, the ruthless heart conceive
 How large the power, how fixed the empire is
 Which benefits confer on generous minds.”

VERY early on the following morning, Ruth roused her friend from heavy sleep. The clock was striking four. A few lingering autumn-birds were twittering in the branches of an old apple-tree, whose arms spread from the trunk in the neighbouring yard to Ruth's window. The shadows of the night had begun to disperse, and a few brilliant dyes displaced the grey sombreness of the eastern heavens.

Gracie seemed quite calm, and did not show such signs of exhaustion as Ruth had feared might follow her unpleasant exposure. To be sure she was very pale, a little weary, but Ruth had made some ginger-tea, her unfailing panacea, and she drank it hot before venturing into the open air. Ruth went down-stairs with her before there was any sign of meeting Mistress Riggs, and let her out into the cool but clear morning.

“Nobody shall know of this,” she whispered; “come to us in any trouble; don't be afraid. Even Aunt Polly would pity you, and keep silence for my sake, and papa would see that no harm came to you.”

Cheered by these words, Gracie moved rapidly down the street, avoiding the few passers-by, devoutly hoping no one in the row would be astir, and presently came to her own little home in which she had seen some happy hours, and whose altar was sacred from associations of

prayer and sweet communion with Him whose blessed cross she had chosen to bear. Her heart sank as she gained the steps and thought of the night before,—the torn letter, the desecrated Bible. Should she find him at home? Perhaps he had gone out after driving her away,—what might not have happened? Her heart stood still with fear. She tried the door, and might have entered,—it had not been locked all night,—but she dared not. Some vague horror might be in store for her; so after a few moments of wretched indecision, she rang the bell. Its hollow sound startled her; there was no response. Again she rang, and this time steps sounded, a door shut, the steps came nearer, slow and dragging they seemed, and as Gracie said to herself, “It is Tom!” the door opened, and husband and wife stood face to face.

No language can express the look with which he shrank back; shame, remorse, contrition, all blending in a single, miserable glance. “I wonder you came back,” he said.

“Why, Tom?” and Gracie stepped in.

“Because I was a brute last night.”

“Oh, Tom! you are sorry, I know.”

“I am a devil, that I know; but, little woman, it was the drink, the cursed drink.” He moved hastily away, but turned back to ask, “Where did you go last night?”

“Where could I go, Tom, but to one place? Ruth took me in; nobody knows it but she.”

“And that imp, Santy.”

“What could I do, Tom?”

“Surely, when a beast in human form drove you out of house and home. Well, I’m done for, now.”

Gracie had taken off her things, and was silently lifting the broken leaves of her cherished little Bible. Tom gave one look at her, groaned, and buried his face in his hands. Someway there was a secret exultation in

Gracie's soul. Something had borne her up above her fears and her trials, so that this morning she felt better and stronger, physically and mentally, than she had for months. She gathered the fragments together, held them silently to her lips for a moment, then carried them to a box standing upon her work-table, and crowded them in. Presently the little maid came, and she set her at work to get breakfast. Coming back into the parlour again, she noticed that Tom had not moved. There he sat, magnificent even in his bowed and perhaps sullen grief. He never moved or stirred, and but a pale line of his brow was visible. Gracie could not bear the silence, the miserable posture. In her wifely heart the love that had only been scared, unfolded its wings, and set her pulses throbbing. She went quietly towards him; she put one hand on his shoulder, another on his knee, and bending slowly down she kissed his forehead. He started with something like a sob, and a low, moaning cry. "Do you mean it? can you mean it,—after—" he shuddered,—“last night?”

"Yes, Tom, I do mean it; I've quite forgiven you. It is not in your heart to do me an injury. It was not you, but the vile drink, that sent me away."

"Yes, it was only the vile drink; I know it, I feel it."

"Then make me a promise, Tom; there can never be a more fitting time than now; say you will never, as long as you live, touch that terrible drink again."

He stood up, lifting his heavy eyes; "I will, I will!" he exclaimed fervently, "so help me—" he shuddered.

"Say it, Tom, say it!" pleaded Gracie in low, broken tones; "it is an awful name, but the only one given under heaven by which we can hope to be saved."

"Well, then,"—he released his under lip, which in his anguish he had bitten,—“so help me,—I dare not, Gracie,

I dare not!"—and he drew back, shuddering, his voice all broken. His wife stood regarding him mournfully. "Why won't you, Tom?" she pleaded; "how can it harm you?"

"Because, Gracie, if there *be* a God—what—must—HE think of me?" For some moments there was utter silence. Tom dropped his face in his hand as he stood by the mantle-piece, resting against it. Presently he felt Gracie's arm upon his chest; felt her head pressed against his heart. "Tom," said a low voice, that sounded as if choked with tears, "for *my* sake won't you try to believe? I think, Tom, if you only say it, HE will help you to believe. Won't you try, Tom?"

"Yes, little woman; you deserve that much at my hands, after my brutal conduct of last night. Hear me, Gracie. So help me GOD! I will never touch another drop of that devil's drink! Now go! leave me alone a moment," he panted. "I—you can't tell what just *that* involves; you don't know—" he shut his lips together hard, and Gracie hurried out of the room.

When they sat down to breakfast Tom was deadly pale. The little maid had been sent to dust the parlour. Gracie tried to busy herself with the coffee; tried to eat, but in vain. It seemed every moment as if Tom were about to burst out upon her with a revelation. And he did.

"Don't think because I said that, little woman, that I am prepared to go with you in any other way. I am not. I have seen, for some time, where the miserable habit of drinking has been leading me, in spite of my determination that it should not conquer me. Last night I met an old friend, before I came home, and he invited me to drink with him. The liquor was strong. He irritated me by argument upon a subject we have always been at loggerheads over, and I drank more than I had been accustomed to. When I came home I was not quite myself; indeed,

I was very far from myself. What you then told me stung me to the quick. Not only did it seem to overthrow my cherished theory, but the fact that you deceived me,—is that a harsh word, Gracie?”

“No harsher than I deserve,” said his wife, “but do me the justice to believe that my motive was not an unworthy one.”

“I cared little for motives then, whatever I may believe in the future,” he said, warily. “I felt myself a poor labouring man, wofully disappointed on my setting out in life. I saw injustice on every hand,—men overreaching each other, and gaining by falsehood and trickery what I would scorn to take unless my merits were adequate to the position, or my labour commensurate with its requirements. Then when I came to hear that my wife had for two long years concealed from me the fact that she was in every way my superior—”

“Oh, no, no, Tom,” murmured Gracie.

“Yes, in every respect, save mere brute force; in that, last night, I proved that I was *your* superior, and it makes me hang my head with shame to say it.”

“Don’t think of it, Tom, please; and as to my poor acquirements,—may they not do you some good, dear husband?”

He drew his brows together.

“Perhaps,” he said, moodily. “I was going on to speak of the feelings that in my then unnatural state gave me a heavier pain than you can ever imagine. I went out from here persuaded that in every way you were unworthy of me, and that I had given you a true and honest heart, and you had merely bargained for a home, and I rushed to the saloon under the hall. There I made myself a brutish beast, and though you have forgiven me, I shall never forgive myself for last night’s miserable work. I never expected you back; I felt that for a provocation like that, I should have cherished an undying revenge.”

“No true Christian could do that, Tom,” said Gracie, “and I confess to you that I have not been a true Christian, as I have often declared with grief to myself. I have, I feel, dishonoured Christ, by withholding my confession to you,—and even now you don’t know all. I am a musician by nature and long study,—oh, Tom! do forgive me; I don’t regret the loss of any of these things now; don’t look so disappointed. If I could cancel all I know of such accomplishments at your desire, and if it would make me happier, I would do it.” Tom shook his head. “And if you knew what a creature I am, how the burden has rolled off, how I seem to see all my duties in a purer light, how much better I love you, Tom, and your soul’s interests are——” her voice failed.

“Don’t cry, little woman,” said Tom, much softened, “don’t cry, and tell me you love me, after my treatment of you last night.”

“Tom, that is never to be mentioned again,” said Gracie, with unwonted dignity, as she dried her eyes. “If you will forget it, or ignore it, I shall never speak of it, —never even think of it.”

“And I tore up your mother’s Bible,” faltered Tom.

“I know it almost by heart,” said Gracie, softly.

“Gracie, you’re an angel,” said Tom, dashing a few drops from his own eyes, “and I’ll tell you what, we’ll take a new lease of life. You shan’t be troubled with my theories; I’ll make you my Bible, for a little while, and study you. I won’t back down if I find that your religion beats mine, or rather,—it’s hardly a religion either,—but I promise you,—your hand,—that if I see any reason for changing my course of life, or belief, I’ll do it!”

She stood there, silent with happiness, her heart thanking God with an eloquence that the angels heard and rejoiced in, for it seemed to her from that hour that Tom was safe.

CHAPTER XXVI.

ONE NIGHT AT STONEYHEDGE.

“ It gives to beauty half its power,
 The nameless charm worth all the rest,
 The light that dances o'er a face
 And speaks of sunshine in the breast;
 If beauty ne'er have set her seal,
 It will supply her absence too,
 And many a cheek looks passing fair
 Because a merry heart shines through.”

SANTY celebrated her fourteenth birth-day by giving a party at Stoneyhedge. She was still anxious to begin upon the necessary alterations and additions that were to be made in the house; that was why she decided on Stoneyhedge as the place of reception, and as it was now the lovely month of June, all the country round was looking its best.

There was plenty of room in the dreary old house that had been so long silent. The large parlour was made bright with pine-boughs and flowers. Chairs were ranged along the wall, and the tables were set in the long-closed room opposite the kitchen. There was no fear of injury to carpets or furniture, the unpainted floors were capital for romping,—and they echoed to many a light footstep.

The cheerful day looked in; outside, the buttercups in the fields, the merry birds holding their own jubilee in the trees, new-foliaged, the meadows on every hand, the spotted bees loaded with honey and full of the adventures of the day to be talked over,—who knows? by all the inmates of Honey Hive,—were not happier in their quiet life than Santy on that memorable occasion. All the friends she had ever known who could be present were

assembled at Stoneyhedge. Foremost and blithest among them was Silent Tom's wife, looking no longer dejected, and burdened, and ill. Tom had kept his word, and was growing every day more like the ideal man she had always seen under his rough exterior. He had not come because his work prevented, but he was quite willing, even eager, that his wife should go into society. Good Mrs Davies was present with her son Jake, who was now in the minister's employ, as well as sexton for the church,—the old sexton being dead,—and a student at the same time, for Jake had manifested his desire to "know something," and an evening school having been opened in the vestry of the church, the young man was beginning to make good progress. All the Sunday-classes were present, whose pupils were of Santy's age, and old Stoneyhedge had never echoed to so many happy hearts before.

Mit, in a new dress, her weird eyes in every place at once, waited upon the guests; Mrs Saunders presided at the table. Santy had carried her building-plans out with her, to consult about with her friends. "You see I am going to school pretty soon," she said, "and I want all the changes made while I am gone;" and she would lead those who choose to follow round the house, and explain the advantages both in comfort and picturesqueness that were sure to accrue. Santy was possessed of acute intelligence, and a good deal of natural talent; so much, that she had been enabled, in one year's tuition, to gather more information than general and careless minds might acquire in five; but yet she was far behind most girls of her age. It had been thought best to send her to a school some ten miles from Winterswood, where her deficiencies might be as promptly made up as possible, before she attained the age of her majority. When Santy was first informed of this contemplated change she was quite inconsolable.

The parsonage was to her a little Paradise, and all its inmates angels, even to Mistress Riggs, whose wings were generally hidden. She could not bear the thoughts of ever leaving them. But Mr Eggleston, acting on his own responsibility as her guardian, was firm in his conviction that this was the only proper course to take, in order to stimulate her energies and rouse her ambition. She was to leave soon after her birthday party,—in a month at the farthest. “Miss Santy,” said Mit, coming towards her with a rueful face, when nearly all the visitors had gone, “you never stop at the house now, and it’s that lonesome that I’m fit to sigh my heart out sometimes.”

“Yes, Miss Santy—’twould do us good to have you with us all by yourself for one night,” echoed old Mrs Saunders, “and to-morrow we’ll show you the new vegetable garden my old man has planted out, back of the barn. I’m sure ’t ’ll please you.”

“Perhaps you had better stay for a night, dear,” said Ruth, “as you are going away so soon, and poor Mit seems to think it would be such a comfort to her;” so Santy consented.

It was quite on the edge of the evening when Santy’s friends took their leave, declaring that they had never enjoyed themselves better; Gracie among them. Santy looked after them wistfully from the old porch, and went into the house shivering. “I feel the old cold in my bones, Mit; please make a fire,” she said, and Mit obeyed, nothing loth, for when the sun went down, except in very hot weather, the room was chilly.

“It don’t seem as if I was the same girl, does it, Mit, who sat here a year and-a-half ago?—and I don’t look much like it, do I?” she added, surveying her fine clothes.

“No, Miss, you look like a real lady,” said Mit, simply. “When you’re growed more, then there’ll be nothing to ask.”

Mrs Saunders was overhead preparing a room for

Santy's accommodation. "Do you remember I questioned you once about God and heaven, and where dead people go to?" asked Santy, shrinking a little from the woman's curiously-bright eyes.

"Yes, Miss, I remember," said Mit passively.

"Well, Mit, I've learned about everything since then."

"Dear me!" said imperturbable Mit.

"Are you a Christian, Mit?"

"Dear knows," was the answer, as Mit played awkwardly with her fingers.

"You ought to be," Santy went on gravely, "at your time of life."

"Be *you*?" queried Mit, reading her face with her sharp eyes.

"Of course I am," was Santy's response. "I say my prayers night and morning, and I think all day Jesus sees me whatever I am doing; and I don't do a single wrong thing, or think a single wrong thought."

"Why, you must be an angel," said Mit, her curiosity and interest awakened.

"No, Mit, I—I ain't *quite* an angel," said Santy, reflectively; "we can't be angels till we get to heaven, but I *know* I'm good," continued the young Pharisee, as she noticed Mit's admiring glances. Forthwith she proceeded to give her poor dependant much religious advice relative to her prayers, her reflections, and her duties.

Santy had never possessed in any remarkable degree the grace of humility. There could be no doubt that she was conscientiously striving to be a Christian, but she was rather following in the wake of Ruth's spiritual experience, than having for herself the vital power of a life hid in Christ. Ruth was in some measure aware of this defect, and in all her conversation strove to make the truth apparent to Santy, but her father said, "There will come

some crisis in this girl's career that will teach her a better lesson than either you or I could, and which at the same time will be a conclusive proof of the developing power of Christianity, as she has seen it practised, or perhaps felt it in her own heart. Wait God's own good time, but meanwhile sow the good seed unsparingly."

So Ruth watched and waited, inculcating the truth in pleasant, simple ways, not overwearying by much talking, or overburdening by dull rounds of lessons.

CHAPTER XXVII.

FINDING THE WILL.

"What war so cruel, or what siege so sore
As that which strong temptation doth apply
Against the fort of reason evermore,
To bring the soul into captivity."

ON the following morning Santy was up early and out in the grounds. She had not slept well. Dreams of the olden time when she had been so nearly starved and frozen, had disturbed her nearly all night, and she could scarcely shake their influence off, even in the beautiful sunshine.

All the little wild flowers had opened their eyes freshly upon the world, and laughed up brightly at her as she took her old path to the river. She smiled at sight of an aged willow-bush, stunted and yellow, whose every trick of outline and shadow was familiar to her. It had been her clothes-line; in the sorrowful days, it had fluttered with poor wooden Bedwrench's rags. Turning again to look

at it, lo ! almost at her feet, half-buried in sand and loose stones, lay old baby Bedwrench, one soiled wooden arm and the ungraceful, featureless face, mutely appealing to Santy's sympathy. This was even a stronger reminder of her past than the bad dreams that had so troubled her, for had she not often held the scarred, forsaken image to her heart ? often kissed it where the lips should be ? and to her childish imagination had it not been charming with golden ringlets and blue eyes, and a love that, though dumb, spoke eloquently to her starved soul ?

"Poor old dolly !" said Santy gently, stooping to pick up the forsaken remnant of her unyouthful youth, "you shan't be left out in the sand. Come into the barn, and I'll put you on a high shelf." The old barn-doors hung loosely by their leathern hinges. It required some strength to open them, but the whim had seized Santy, and she would go in. The barn had never quite recovered from its starved appearance, though both grain and fodder had recently been stacked there. A few consumptive wisps of straw lay along the floor, and Santy, as she followed the light that culminated at the small, cobwebbed window-panes, suddenly saw at the extreme end of one of the rough beams beneath the window, something that looked like a red box. It shone like a jewel, so strongly did the sun's rays concentrate upon its polished surface.

"I wonder what that is ?" queried Santy to herself, placing dolly on the edge of a bin, and going forward till she stood directly under it. Her dreams of the past night recurred to her ; in them she had lived over again the scene of her uncle's death, and like an echo from the silent shore came to her memory the words he had said about a box, in that hopeless, dying hour.

"How can I ever reach it ?" she thought, looking vaguely about her.

An old house-ladder with iron rungs stood in the corner. It was very heavy, but Santy's curiosity was roused, and stimulated her strength. She managed to drag it within reaching distance of the beam, and after ascertaining that it was safe, she began the ascent slowly and carefully.

"There is no obstacle to him who wills, Miss Ruth says, or to her either, I suppose," muttered Santy, as, with the box in her hand, she made slow and difficult progress downward till she touched the broken boards that made the foundation of the barn.

Bedwrench dolly was quite forgotten in this new and engrossing excitement, but alas! the box was locked.

She remembered that Mit carried all her uncle's keys, or knew where they were, so she composed herself as best she could, hid the box for a time, and went to the house for them. Mit was just making the fire for breakfast. She started at sight of Santy, and rubbed her bright eyes. "If I didn't think 'twas a ghost, Miss!" she said, handing her a bunch of rusted keys hanging from a rusted ring. "The air's better for you here, Miss, than down there. I never did see your cheeks so red!"

Santy laughed, and hurried out. Back into the barn she ran, and tried the keys, one after another, until, as usual in such cases, she found the last one fitted the lock. Nothing but papers—as the lid flew back; she turned them out in her lap, quickly, with a disappointed face; only papers, papers, some carefully folded, others thrust into envelopes. What she had expected she could hardly declare to herself; whether gold, or jewels, or precious stones, but she gazed at the seeming rubbish in her lap with disappointed eyes. As she ran through them aimlessly, the heading of a long, thick paper, that was different in texture and size from the rest, met her glance. It ran thus:—"The last will and testament of Simon Grue," in

large letters, written with red ink. This Santy opened in a leisurely way. She knew what a will meant, in law, but as she read on her face grew white and her breath came quick, for the old man had willed the house and land, with certain funded moneys, to his grandson, Thomas Warwick, the son of his only daughter. It further stated that his own marriage certificate would be found among the other papers in the box. Poor Santy ! The will fell from her trembling fingers, as if it scorched them. She sat there for a moment, weary and haggard, then looked about her, terror in lip and eye, as if she had been rudely awakened from a cruel dream.

The old house was no longer hers, to alter and repair, and make beautiful ; the fields have passed from her possession ; nothing was hers, and she who sat there, so rich in this world's goods but a little while before, felt herself comparatively a beggar. The hot tears rushed to her eyes, and seemed to scald the lids ; she gasped for breath, it was such a terrible blow !

“ If only I had never seen it,” she murmured ; “ if the barn had burnt down ; oh, what shall I do ! what shall I do ? ” All the evil forces latent in her character came now to the surface. Remember she had suffered from the blight of insolation, from cold, hunger, and neglect, and the idea of poverty was terrible to her. She had tasted the sweets of society, of friendship, of hope, of possession, and that she was scarcely more than a child in nature and immaturity of intellect, which made the blow a doubly hard one to bear. All considerations save those of self were banished from her mind, and in such a state as she then found herself, the tempter was very near. She crouched down, covering her face with her hands ; then she placed the box at her side and hid it with her dress. She had a vague fear that somebody would come out and

find her there, for only a moment before the breakfast-bell had sounded. Her conjecture was right. Old Mr Saunders' heavy boots crunched the gravel-path that led to the door. He looked kindly in.

"Why, here you be," he said, "for all the world snuggled down like a settin' hen ! The folks told me to come find ye. Breakfast's on the table."

"I don't want any breakfast," said Santy, as calmly as she could speak ; "at least not yet. Please tell them not to wait, for I won't come ; or to disturb me either. Be sure and say it's *no use* to call me," she added, as he turned away, and the sunlight showed the threadbare seams on his broad back. "She's a moneyed lass, but a contrary one," he muttered, as he made haste back to the house, eager for a warm breakfast. And Santy was alone again, with her bewildered thoughts.

"I *will* have the property,—it's mine !" she muttered, clenching her hands hard. I won't be a beggar, and have others help me. It's a wicked will—and—nobody knows of it—nobody knows of it !" she whispered hoarsely with increasing energy,—but ME ! No, no ; not a soul ! I am the first one who has seen these papers ; if they were all burnt up,—all these wretched papers,—nobody would be the wiser,—oh !"

Down went her burning face in both hands, and she trembled as if in an ague fit. In her imagination she saw herself the agent of this contemplated destruction ; beheld the spot selected, the dried grass and twigs kindled by her determined fingers, the papers blazing, every line effaced—then came the grey ashes, then white, and lo ! the deed was done. She was rich again, ready to go forward with all her daring plans and projects—her school—her charities—her hopes of useful womanhood were all blasted no longer—but now, behind them all, stood a black

shadow, the shadow of a sin voluntarily committed—for love of wealth; a haunting, persistent shadow that would never leave her all the days of her life; that would make her sleep hateful, and the thought of death unbearable.

The warm, sunny barn, with its aroma of sweet clover and hay, was the theatre of the old, old battle between the forces of Right and Wrong—fought upon the untrodden field of a young girl's heart. "Oh, what shall I do?"

Like a ray of finest sunshine the words had forced themselves into the crevices of Santy's consciousness,

"Thou God seest me."

No one would know it—SAVE GOD! and all the world might better know it than HE, if it could be hidden from His awful vision.

"I won't be wicked—I won't be—but oh, dear, dear!" she moaned, falling on her knees—"oh, dear Lord, what shall I do?"

Was it the rustling of wings that sounded near? Had the angels come to lead a poor, struggling soul to victory? Santy looked up at the sound; no, only the will that had fallen at her feet as she moved. She took it in her hands and her face hardened again. Only to rend it in pieces and be free! Once done, and she knew that though she might carry the secret in her soul, nobody should read it in her eyes.

"I—oh, Ruth, Ruth! oh,—Mr Eggleston, how could I meet you again," she sobbed.

Why need she? She had only to will to remain at Stoneyhedge, and resolutely maintain it. She had only to be stubborn, to seem unkind, to *be*—what? Everything that was vile in her own eyes, and in the eyes of God. She recalled her conversation with Mit, poor, ignorant, but honest Mit; honest in every fibre of her dwarfed soul. How glibly she had talked to her of Christ and religion.

"Poor parrot," she said of herself, with a curious blending of pathos and contempt. She dried her eyes, and hushed her sobs. Only one little prayer issued from her tortured spirit, "Oh, Jesus, help me to be good! oh, help me to be good!" The battle was soon over; henceforth Santy would never need to theorize. She shuddered as she lifted herself up, at the awful nature of the sin she had contemplated. Would she ever pass the spot where that fire had nearly been kindled,—a sweet, secluded little hollow—without a shudder again? No need to think of that, though,—for not an inch of the land was hers now. She must try to be reconciled to the thought; the direful thought of her poverty. And Silent Tom and his wife—they had never seemed to like her, she fancied, and he had no belief in God. How strange that the Good Father should lift him into sudden prosperity, when he acknowledged HIM in none of his ways.

But however it was with them, she at least had done just what God had wished her to do. If one nature needed shade to perfect it, and another the sunshine, why should she demur?—it was God's business, not hers.

In some shape such thoughts passed dimly through her mind, as she replaced the will, not stopping to look at the other papers, and slowly locked the box.

Mrs Saunders bustled to the fire as Santy entered. "I've kept the toast as hot as I could," she said.

"I don't want any breakfast," said Santy, her lips quivering, "and I'm going down to the parsonage."

"Miss Santy, do you ever take the advice of your elders?" asked Mrs Saunders. "Yes," said Santy wearily.

"Then take mine, and sit down to your toast. No matter how little you eat."

"If she only knew," thought Santy, as she tried to obey. "And Mit! oh, what will poor Mit do?"

"What has got into the child?" muttered Mrs Saunders. "I wonder if money'll spile her as it does so many?"

Mit came in, her arms full of dry chips. A strange tenderness welled up in Santy's yearning heart.

"Mit, I'm going now," she said, "and I don't know when I shall see you again. You'll never think hard of me, whatever happens?"

"Think hard o' you, Miss Santy," said Mit, rapidly gathering the hem of her apron into plaits; "never, Miss Santy; you're an angel, as I've often said,—and I'm very partic'ler with my prayers now, both night and morning,—I should like very much to be such a good Christian as you be, Miss Santy."

Poor Santy's heart swelled; the tears rushed to her eyes.

"Mit, I'm not a good Christian at all," she said chokingly. "I'm, I'm just a miserable sinner. You mustn't try to be like me."

Mit's queer eyes opened to their widest extent.

"I thought you said——" she began.

"Never mind, Mit; I said that when I didn't know anything—of—no matter, we won't talk about it," she added, checking a sob. "I'm glad you say your prayers."

"Yes, indeed," said Mit, fervently; "it all came back to me when I tried hard to think,—the lines I learned at the poor'us,—

'Mather, Mark, Luke'n, John,
Bless this bed as I lay on.'"

"But, Mit, that's no prayer," said Santy, for the moment startled out of her troubled thoughts, "that isn't praying to God."

"Well, won't He hear it, Miss, if I don't know no other?"

"I guess so," said Santy, reflectively, "but if you'd like, I think Miss Ruth will teach you a better prayer."

CHAPTER XXVIII.

MADE WHOLE.

“ Pour, oh risen sun
Of righteousness, the light for which I yearn,
Upon the darkness of this mortal hour,—
This tract of night in which I walk forlorn ;
Behold the night is now far spent, the morn
Breaks, breaking from afar through a night shower.”

HER conversation with Mit had withdrawn Santy's mind somewhat from her own sorrows, but as she walked slowly down the road towards the town, the old depression came back, and she seemed to herself the most forlorn creature that walked the earth.

Ruth was surprised at the little pale face with its troubled eyes, the low voice, the look of real suffering with which Santy put the box in her hand, with a request that she would look at it.

“ Where did you get it, Santy ? ”

“ In uncle's old barn ; I saw it on a beam, and got up there by a ladder.”

“ Why, child, these are papers of great value.”

“ I know it, Miss Ruth,” answered Santy in a subdued voice.

Ruth looked up at her with a searching glance.

“ Did you read them, dear ? ” she asked, pity in her voice.

“ I,—I read the will,” Santy faltered.

“ It seems almost incredible, my dear child ! whatever happens you will always be the same to us.”

She opened her arms, and Santy's head was on her shoulder in a moment.

“ I am thankful you are so calm under such a blow,”

continued Ruth; "it is enough to shake older nerves than yours."

"But I haven't been calm,—I've been wicked," said Santy, and then she hid her face again.

Ruth forbore to question her.

"I must give these papers to papa. I suppose he will know just what to do. How very, very strange it seems!"

Santy withdrew herself. The storm had passed, and it surprised her to realize how calmly she could think of it even now. No one had changed towards her,—no one would change, and sweeter than all, she experienced the approbation of conscience that she had withstood the fiery ordeal by which her integrity had been threatened. Young as she was, she could see now how loving Jesus Christ, and living with HIM, was the practice of the habits of His beautiful life in resisting evil even unto death, in repelling selfishness, in calmly trusting God, and doing all the duties of life, the smallest as well as the greatest, with an eye single to His glory, in being always happy because always sure of His love and His aid under all circumstances.

Ruth carried the box and all the papers into her father's study. After an examination, the minister made a clear report. Nearly all the miser's property,—and there was much more than had been suspected,—went unconditionally to Tom, who was his only grandson and nearest living relative. It seemed by a perusal of the papers, that both Tom's life and that of his mother had rested under a shadow for many years, under an imputation which these hitherto concealed witnesses proved to be false. Santy was to inherit a few thousand dollars, provided she remained at Stoneyhedge, and never sought out her relatives. Mit was also remembered in the will, and was to stay in the old house till the day of her death.

As soon as he had sorted the papers, Mr Eggleston put

on his hat and started for the house of Silent Tom. It was now evening, and the stars were coming thickly out in the clear, wide heavens. The minister was very thoughtful. It was to his narrow, earthly vision, a strange providence that this man, so blinded in his opposition to truth, had thus become the possessor of power,—for, in a certain sense, wealth is power. Was there not danger that he would use it, as far as lay within his limited responsibility, for the subversion of Christianity? Would it make him bolder, more daring and dangerous,—more irretrievably a scoffer? Would it give a wider scope to his impious daring, a larger field for the display of perverted ability?

Tom was sitting in the porch when the minister neared the house, with the tin box under his arm.

"I was just thinking about you, reverend sir," said Tom, rising, as Mr Eggleston came forward. "A question has been perplexing my mind,—but come in, sir, come in. Gracie will be glad to see you."

"I have come on a matter of business," said the minister, depositing the box on a table.

"Hang business, for a few moments, begging your pardon!" said Tom, laughing, "my question won't wait. It is this: your Christianity is eighteen hundred years old. For all that time your pulpits and churches have been filled. Now, why haven't you converted the world? Why do men lie, cheat, steal, swear? Why does corruption lurk in our streets, in our houses, in our politics? Why are men and women houseless and hopeless? How is it, if Christianity is so good and powerful, it has accomplished so little? That's what I asked my wife."

"I tried to answer him, Mr Eggleston," said Gracie, "but I'm not fond of argument;" and she sighed.

"Since you will push business into the background," said Mr Eggleston, "so be it, for the time. Unlike your

wife, I *am* fond of argument, and think that good results from it when it is undertaken in the fear of God. But if you please, I will answer your question by asking another. Infidelity,—to call doubt and scepticism, generally, by that name,—is quite as old as Christianity, you'll allow."

"Old as the world!" said Tom, triumphantly.

"Very well, for the sake of argument we'll give it priority in age. And now I want you to answer me. I want you to show me the reforms that have grown out of your infidel theories. Where are they? In what happy Utopia do they flourish? Has infidelity, which you consider so much superior to Christian belief, reared hospitals and asylums for the poor and oppressed? Has it opened schools, built colleges, founded institutions, mighty for good? Has it reared temples of worship to its God of Nature? or raised altars to truth and virtue? What arts have flourished under its patronage? Where are its histories, where its mighty men? Some of the latter have attained to honour, I grant you, but what kind of honour? Merely to have some anniversary-day kept with drunkenness and feasting.

"You may say success is not the test of a superior doctrine. I say it is. It was declared that in every land some should bow the knee to Christ. Where do you go that you do not see this declaration fulfilled? The higher the civilization, the nobler the worship; and, in spite of the terrible combinations, the mighty auxiliaries that evil has brought to bear against it, Christianity has abolished many of the most fearful wrongs that have afflicted humanity; and I challenge you or any other opponent of the Master I serve, to deny these facts."

"Opponent?" muttered Tom.

"Yes, opponent; you have placed yourself, like a man in armour, in opposition to the Lord Jesus Christ; you

are one of His enemies, who said, he that is not for Me is against Me. And you are fighting HIM of whom it is said the world was not worthy. You are fighting HIM who gave His very life for you, that you might be an upright, pure, and holy man, and attain an incorruptible inheritance. Man! you the short-lived atom, who exist by HIS permission, are fighting God."

"You put it rather strongly, Mr Eggleston," said Tom, his face flushing.

"I would put it stronger if I could, Mr Warwick, for the sake of your own happiness. You are a powerful man, both physically and mentally, and such soldiers, converted to Christ, do valiant service. I would that my Master had many more, but—" and he paused to give his words additional emphasis,—“I have with me here, something that ought, by God's grace, to seal your lips for ever from accusations against God's mercy. Santy found this box in the old barn at Stoneyhedge."

Silent Tom started. His face suddenly grew white, then flushed again; his lips parted; his breath came quick. Gracie looked on in wonder.

"You have only to establish your claim," continued the minister, "for here is the will of old Simon Grue, duly signed, sealed, and attested, and by that instrument you become the owner of all his property, real and personal, with the exception of a few conditional bequests to others."

Tom was leaning forward, his shining eyes fastened on the clergyman's face. "Who—who does he say—I—am?" whistled from his dry lips and parched tongue.

"He acknowledges you as the son of his only daughter. The certificate of his marriage to her mother, dated nearly fifty years back, is in the envelope which I hold in my hand." Tom drew back, almost gasping for breath. "Certificate!" he exclaimed,—“My mother!"

He held his hands hard against his eyes; his lips quivered. After a moment he spoke again, having mastered his terrible emotion.

“Oh, Mr Eggleston—that is better than all the money. Thank God! God in heaven, I acknowledge THEE,—I do acknowledge THEE!”

He had risen from his chair; his hands were raised; tears streamed from his eyes such as he had not shed for years.

“If you knew all, sir,—my mother! My sainted mother!” he cried, his voice like the fountains of his soul, all broken up; “at last your memory is without stain! Oh, this is too much joy!”

He fell into his seat again, and hid his face in his folded arms. His wife was at his side; her hand upon his broad head, her face illuminated with her heart’s silent happiness.

Presently he wiped his eyes; with a mighty effort he commanded himself. “You will call this weakness,” he said, trying to smile, “and perhaps it is. I could never get the truth from my grandfather,—only taunts and words that drove me nearly mad. You see by this certificate he was married abroad. My grandmother died when my mother was born, and he brought the babe to this country, but never acknowledged the truth—never! I hope I shall forgive him!” he added, with the old savage energy; “and the poor child grew up under a cloud, for why, no one can tell, now he has gone to his account, my grandfather never owned her as his daughter, leaving room for the unkind slanders of those who are always in readiness to injure the unfortunate. I, knowing what she suffered, all her poor, painful life, declared that there could be no God to take cognizance of the woes of his wronged children. I beg you won’t notice my emotion,” he said, as he rose again and walked to and fro. “I was at first utterly unmanned

for a moment, but I am calmer now, much calmer, and ready to listen to what you have to say. This property of Simon Grue's, then, belongs to me?"

"Yes."

"And it was found—the papers were found by that child, Santy?"

"Yes, and brought to me by her."

"Why, look you," said Silent Tom, stopping short in his walk, "it breaks upon me that there is a higher Power, that is working constantly by its providences. God help me! how hard it is to believe when one has doubted so long! There is that child, Santy; I saved her, thank God! but after what temptations!"

He shuddered as his memory reverted to that time.

"This turns her out of house and home,—is it not so, Mr Eggleston? It sends her adrift upon the world, poor child. Not while I live, though, shall she want for friends or shelter."

"If she chooses to live at Stoneyhedge," said the minister, "she has some few thousand dollars at her disposal."

"I hope she will," said Gracie; "I shall always love her dearly. I am very grateful to her."

"I am sure you will both do your best by her," said the minister as he rose to leave them.

Tom stood up and held out his hands.

"Believe that injustice has partly made me what I am,—what I was," he said with much feeling, "and, with all humility I say it, from this hour you shall find me on the side of your Master."

"God be thanked," said the minister fervently.

"And, doctor, let me tell you that your pluck did me as much good as your sermons, though you have been a little hard on me sometimes."

"I had no intention of hurting your feelings, but I was bound by my obligations to my God to be faithful with you. I might have said with the apostles, 'Am I therefore become thine enemy because I tell thee the truth?'"

"You have done perfectly right," said Tom, quietly; "I was in the wrong all the time," and there the conference ended.

That same hour a letter edged broadly with black was placed in Ruth's hand, by her father.

"I found it at the office," he said; "I fear it contains bad news. You will find me in the study if it has anything for me," he added.

Ruth was comforting Santy, who had laid bare her whole heart, while telling about her strange adventure at Stoneyhedge, when her father brought the letter.

"Who can it be from?" she murmured in a vague alarm, as she opened it slowly and reluctantly. Her face cleared, as she read.

"Why, Santy, dear, it is from your mother!"

"My mother!" Santy was at her feet at a bound. The thought of her mother, at this crisis, was electrical.

"Yes, my darling girl, she has returned from abroad," added Ruth in joyful tones. "It seems that she never heard of your uncle's death till she reached her home, and she says she is hungry for the sight of you, —her first-born. She has often thought of and longed for you, but supposes and hopes that you have been happy."

The girl's face was hidden on Ruth's shoulder.

"My poor little Santy!" and Ruth encircled her waist with one arm, "you have been happy here, haven't you?"

"Always," sobbed Santy.

"She farther writes that she has enjoyed her travels, that the little sister is well, and much grown, and she

talks of her dear sister Santy, and just remembers her; and there is no longer any fear of poverty, and she shall soon fold her precious child to her heart and,—why, Santy! she will be here this very night!—on the tenth, she says, and the letter is dated,—let me see, on the fourth. It has been delayed, and, Santy, put on your best bib and tucker, for I shouldn't wonder if she were almost here. The cars come in at eight, and it is nearly half-past seven, and only two miles from the depot. Now see what God has done for you!"

Santy stood pale and silent, but her eyes shone.

"How rich I *shall* be!" she said at last, when she found her voice. "My mother and my dear little sister!"

"Better than money, dear," said Ruth.

"But I did want to stay here and help, and do so much good!" a sob swelled Santy's bosom.

Ruth went to the little red-covered book, kissing it, as she always did, as she lifted it from the box in which she kept it.

She snatched one sentence.

"Beloved, if God wills, I would that I could be near you, sometimes in your happiest moments, or that some subtle chord of sympathy might thrill along the electric wires of heaven, to tell me that you are glad."

"I am very glad, George," she whispered, as she put the little book back, and turned to help Santy in her preparations.

That night the parsonage was a joyful place.

"The mercy of the Lord is onleemited," said Mistress Riggs, with a perplexed face; "but our quarters are reether straightened at this present time, what wi' the carpets up reeght an' leeft, an' the beds all set out to aire. But I will do my best, Miss Rooth, to conquer circumstances, an' gi' you the west chamber for your

ledly-fokes, if they'll sleep without a druggit to the flure."

"Certainly they will," said Ruth.

"An' the lass ha' found her mither, an' her sister," continued the good woman,—“an' that infeedle has got the property! Weel, weel, meerciles 'll never cease, an' I suppose the Lord is like His sun an' His rain, shines an' fa's upon the joost an' the unjoost. Wha's to be done wi' the faulks up t' the hoose?"

"They are to stay, I believe, just the same," said Ruth.

"And we're to lose th' lassie?"

"From something her mother said, I shouldn't wonder,—if she likes the place,—if she came here to live. She is tired of the city."

"I'd na' like to miss the bonny thing," continued Miss Riggs,—“so amen to the hope that her mither 'll come to Winterswood."

"Amen," echoed Ruth, and went back to her guests.

Mrs Rogers impressed them all favourably, and Nelly was as sweet and beautiful a girl as the sun ever shone on. Santy acknowledged that she was perfectly happy in her new acquisition, and not once did she refer to Stoneyhedge in regretful terms. She relinquished the money her uncle had left her on the condition that she should stay in the old house, and prevailed upon her mother to buy a pretty property in Winterswood.

And Ruth,—what is her experience, as she looks out from the pleasant circle of home to find and lead back all wanderers from the Father's house over whom her influence is possible? Ask her, as she sits there, with that rapt look of blended love and devotion upon her sweet face, and she will tell you that she lacks nothing; that to work for Christ is the dearest pleasure of her life; that He is more to her than any human being, however devoted, and that

nothing in this world may ever come between her and her Saviour. She has learned to look to Him as a personal, near presence,—to feel that she has only to put her hand out to be clasped in His; to *realize* that He is more to her than father, lover, or friend. I, who know her personally, tell you this, for it is no fancy sketch, but the true picture, as far as my feeble portraiture will permit, of one whose life is hid with Christ in God.

As for Stoneyhedge, it became in time one of the finest places in the town, which gradually crept up to its borders.

Gracie's taste furnished it, and she did not forget a splendid piano, whose music Tom soon learned to love.

He also kept his word to the minister, and became a power in the land, so that nowhere was found one more willing to spend and be spent for the Master, than the once daring scoffer, SILENT TOM.

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